This is your United States History “book.” It is a free, electronically-based text that also can be purchased from the college’s bookstore, printed and bound. Alternatively, you may print chapters to bring to class. Students also are encouraged to utilize a tablet, computer, or phone to access the text during class (see syllabus).

Chapters of this book are comprised of two, merged sources: an open-educational resource (OER) called the American Yawp (Yawp), developed by historians from across the country, and Unit Notes. The Yawp is the official “textbook” part of the book. The Unit Notes are a typed-narrative version of class notes that I took while I was an undergraduate/graduate student. At the start of my teaching career, these notes were used for lectures. As times changed and teaching styles evolved, the typed notes were distributed to online/on-campus students, in an effort to move away from lecture and toward active-learning course design.

With the advent of OERs, the Unit Notes simply were added to the Yawp to help students understand the theme of the class (see syllabus) and to reinforce or add to information found in the Yawp. This is why they appear before each chapter’s Yawp’s content. As mentioned in the syllabus, the theme of the class is used throughout the semester in your homework/discussion board work, in class activities/discussion, and in assessments.

It is important to emphasize that the Unit Notes are provided specifically for students in United States History classes at Bay College and function within the context of the learning objectives for the course, which includes a theme analysis that helps students to understand the past not as disparate and disconnected events, but rather as a story arc with structure and meaning. Thus, individuals accessing this modified OER may not find the Unit Notes of use in other educational settings or courses.
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Background to Colonization

European Nationalism, Commercialism and Colonialism Explained:
After 1400 Europe gradually started to recover from centuries of decline and decay and entered into the Renaissance Era (which means “rebirth”). During this period, European leaders desired territorial expansion and the conquest of other parts of the world for the purpose of spreading Christianity and obtaining riches from spices and exotic goods. Europeans were able to do so due to the technological advancements of the era, such as in navigation equipment and ship-building. Another factor encouraging exploration and colonization was the fact that Europe was reorganizing itself out of feudal states and into nation-states.

The first European Country to nationalize (become a nation-state) and explore was Portugal, which led the way to the West Indies for spices. The most famous (for this class’ purposes) was Spain & the explorer Christopher Columbus. The goal was for him to establish a trade route to Asia. With Columbus’ landing in the “New World” the stage for contact and exchanges between the Nishnabi (a broad term for Native Americans*) and Europeans was set. Columbus and others carried with them cultural perceptions, which very much biased them toward the Nishnabi* culture. Both groups had background experiences creating cultural misperceptions, which then led into cultural conflict and warfare.

The *Anishnabi/First Peoples/Nishnabi/Native Americans (all terms are acceptable, I typically use Nishnabi or Native American) were present in North America for thousands of years before Columbus. Their ancestors migrated to the continent via a land bridge between Asia and the Americas and then dispersed throughout the Americas. They established nations and tribes with different languages, cultures, and civilizations. When Columbus arrived in the New World there were an estimated 10 million Indians in the would be United States. This number declined over the next several generations due to disease and warfare, and 90% of the estimated number were wiped out. Disease, not warfare, was the number one killer of the Nishnabi, with deaths even resulting in tribes without any European contacts (due to the spread of germs).

The main linguistic group of Nishnabi with whom the Europeans settling the future U.S. interacted were the Algonquins. Like other Europeans, these settlers saw the Nishnabi in a negatively, due to preconceived cultural misperceptions. The two major views of the Nishnabi were: a) they were evil and of the devil or b) they were like children and could be taught to become white-like. Europeans believed that the Nishnabi deaths due to disease were the work of God, who was trying to rid the wilderness of “heathens.” This dynamic exchange of diseases, plants, and animals between the New and Old Worlds is called the “Columbian Exchange,” and started when Columbus arrived.
DISEASES: Old to New: small pox, influenza, typhus, measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever, pneumonia - New to Old: a more deadly strand of syphilis.

FOODS: Old to New: banana, dates, sugar, wheat, grapes - New to Old: tobacco, coca, corn, tomato, pumpkin, potato.

ANIMALS: Old to New: horses, insects, cows, bigger dogs, oxen, pigs, sheep, rats, cats, goats, chickens (European animals gave diseases to American animals) - New to Old: iguana, rattlesnake, buffalo.

For more information see Alfred Crosby’s book The Columbian Exchange.

Cultural Baggage of Europeans

ALL OF EUROPE: The primary cultural baggage of Europeans that we’ll note was the religious views, later brought to the New World. Massive changes occurred in Europe due to challenges to the authority of the Catholic church. The church, which dominated Europe, fell into an era of corruption. Martin Luther responded to this in the Germanic province of Wittenberg in October of 1517, when he posted his “95 Theses” of protest and calls for reform on a church door. This act and subsequent support of Luther’s position started the Protestant Reformation. It spread through all of Europe and many other denominations arose out of it. It also sent Europe into wide-spread political-religious turmoil. Since church and state were one in European countries, any challenge to the church was a challenge to the monarchy and thus was considered treasonous. This impacted Great Britain too, though the story was a bit different. Luther gained followers from all classes, who were called Lutherans These individuals made the collective choice to follow Luther’s thinking. The main views, for our purposes, were: The Pope was not needed, as men could access the word of God for themselves via reading the Bible. They could be forgiven without the Pope. John Calvin agreed with Luther, but took his ideas further. In 1536, he wrote a book in which the following three points were articulated: The Pope was not needed, as men could access the word of God for themselves via reading the Bible; laymen should have a greater voice in the government of the church; his followers had to work hard and maintain a strict morality; his followers were Calvinists; and the denominations coming out of the Calvinist religious tradition were very influential on the settlement and culture of the New World, particularly in New England as Congregationalists. What was the significance of the Protestant Reformation to the New World? Well, all of the major Christian traditions in the New World came out of the Reformation. The settlers of New England in particular embraced Calvin’s ideas. The emphasis on reading the Bible for a greater personal understanding of God meant that literacy rates in these denominations increased. And, an emphasis was placed on the individual’s responsibility for their relationship with God, apart from Popes, priests, and bishops, who
were denied to have any special powers or special relationship with God.

SPECIFIC TO ENGLAND: At the time colonization efforts in England started, that nation was politically unstable. This dynamic contributed to migrations to the New World. Also, around that time, intellectuals and leaders formed an interest in colonization, as well as the reform of English society. For example, Thomas More in 1551 published a social criticism of England in *Utopia*. This publication drew a picture of an island where humans lived in peace and harmony, with freedom of thought, expression, and without oppression. The book proposed an alternative way of life for English society, without overtly naming or blaming. The enclosure movement, during Queen Elizabeth’s reign 1558-1603 led to the displacement of poor agricultural workers. The lands they worked were converted for livestock production (specifically sheep for their wool). The displaced wandered to cities looking for work. This led to overcrowding, poverty, crime, etc... Social thinkers proposed colonization as a way to dispose of this “lowly” population, along with the criminal elements in England. Richard Hakluyt was one such thinker and “propagandist” for New World colonization. He also espoused the theory of mercantilism to give England raw materials, cheap labor, and new markets for British-made goods. England first tried colonization in 1585. Roanoke colony was established, but failed due to the disappearance of the colonists, who were most likely incorporated with the local Nishnabi for survival. After the failure at Roanoke, England did not colonize again until Jamestown. People had religious reasons for leaving England as well. In 1534, Henry VIII established the Church of England (Anglican Church in the New World). Just like with the Catholic church, other denominations refused to worship according to its dictates. Thus political persecution of Protestants (& Catholics) by the Church of England (and vice versa when Protestant monarchs were in power) was high. Upon leaving England, such people brought to the New World: Protestantism, capitalism, English common law, and other aspects of British institutions and culture.

## Other Europeans

### Other major European countries in North America:

1. The French - 1600s - Canada (New France) was the main area of settlement. Quebec was established as a haven for Catholics. The main economic activity was fur trading. Missionaries (Jesuits) lived with the natives, moved with them. The French established communities along trade routes.

2. The Spanish - 1600s - first settled South America and Latin America. The missionaries for the Spanish were the Franciscans. The main Spanish activity was searching for gold. St. Augustine (Florida) was established in 1672.

3. The Dutch - New Netherlands (New York) and New Amsterdam (New York City) were controlled by the Dutch until the 1670s.
Types of English Colonies

The English Colonies:
Great Britain was culturally and linguistically the “Mother Country” to the settlements in North America. Although a variety of nationalities settled in the English colonies, ultimately it was understood that the colonies were English possessions. There were three types of British colonial charters: Royal (controlled and run by the crown), Proprietary (controlled and run by an individual), and Corporate (controlled and run by a company). All of these, though ultimately were under the British government’s control, and it was expected that the operations of the colonies would profit the crown directly or indirectly.

In this section, the main distinctions between the original colonies are provided, in terms of the theme of the class. See the textbook & do more research for more specific information about each colony. And, before you continue, obtain a map of colonial America and consider the impact of the geographic differences between these southern and northern colonies on each section's economic and cultural development.

English Colonies - Southern

What later became the southern states:
Virginia: Jamestown was established 1607 by the Virginia Company - was important, because it was the first English colony and because it set important precedents that other colonies, especially in the South, followed.

- **Staple Crop Production: 1612** - John Rolfe altered the traditional, medicinal plant of the Nishnabi, tobacco, to make it more palatable to Europeans, and it was marketed to Europe for smoking. 1612 King James I of Great Britain said smoking was harmful, and wanted smoking to stop, but the money made by it outweighed the health concerns of the King. Large-scale staple crop production of tobacco, and then later other crops, gave Jamestown the ability to survive and (in the long-term) the South its wealth.

- **Head Right System: 1618** - The Virginia Company, in order to encourage the settlement of their colony and make mercantilism work, instituted a policy (Head Right System) whereby a male settler received 50 acres of land per person he brought with him to the colony. This led to the formation of the large, southern plantations, and to the owners of these plantations acquiring political power within the colonial government. It also created a demand for cheap labor and encouraged wealthier settlers to indenture servants from Europe, in order to obtain even larger estates.

- **House of Burgesses: 1619** - Though Parliament was a representative body, the Burgesses was the first form of representative govern-
ment in the English colonies. Only wealthy, landed individuals could serve in the Burgess-es, which met in Jamestown. The Virginia Company supported this initial form of gov-
ernment, in order to facilitate the running of the colony on a daily basis.

- **Institution of Slavery - 1619 / 1660** - Slavery did not exist in Virginia from day-one. In 1619 a Dutch vessel brought Africans to Jamestown as indentured servants. These individuals were released, after their contracts ended. However, racism was prevalent in the New World prior to settlement, and African workers were treated more harshly than European workers. By the 1630s, black workers were treated differently/more harshly, and legalized slavery started when three runaway indentured servants were caught. The whites received the usual punishment of an extended servitude, while the black received a punishment of life-long servitude. The idea caught on amongst the plantation owners, who wanted to make a one-time, life-long investment on a slave versus on temporary indentured servants. In addition, once the word got back to Europe about the harsh conditions in the New World, Europeans were less willing to indenture themselves to an unknown land. The demand for slaves further increased.

- **Royal Colony -1622** - Jamestown became a Royal Colony, when fighting between the Nishnabi led to the deaths of 350 colonists. Despite becoming a Royal colony, it kept its representative government. The colony expanded up the James river and westward.

**Maryland:** In 1634, George Calvert created Maryland as a haven for Catholics (and to make money). The 200 settlers developed it into a thriving colony, via tobacco production and the use of head-right. Due to the religious struggles in Europe, Maryland faced problems between its growing Protestant population and its Catholics. In order to maintain power, Calvert passed the Act of Religious Toleration in 1649. Though developed in effort to retain Calvert’s power, the act allowed for all Christians in Maryland to worship as they pleased. Protestants overthrew Calvert and repealed the act. Nonetheless the act was important, because in the long-term it reflected the fact that colonial survival required some degree of religious toleration.

**Carolina Colony:** In 1663, King Charles II gave his favorite politicians a reward for their support. The initial proprietors of Carolina Colony intended to use it for land speculation (a way of making money via the resale of land). The colony had a constitution, which was the first of its kind in the New World. It was written by the philosopher John Locke in 1669 and was only a hierarchy for what society in the colony looked like. Proprietors were at the top, then the lesser land owners, common whites, and free blacks followed. Slaves were at the bottom of the hierarchy. In Caroli-
na all citizens were to have religious freedom. However, parts of Carolina were settled differently. Lesser land owners from Virginia settled the north, while wealthy, large plantation owners from the West Indies settled the southern part. Since property was the key to power in colonial America, the men from the southern part of the colony politically dominated in Carolina’s representative assembly. Northern Carolinians felt their interests were not being protected, and the colony voted to split in 1729 into North and South Carolina.

Georgia: James Ogelthorpe helped establish this colony in 1732. Georgia first was a penal colony and a buffer zone between the English and Spanish possessions in the area. Each settler got 50 acres, served in the military, and Africans were not allowed. However, due to poor settlement patterns, Ogelthorpe allowed slavery in 1750, and the colony subsequently thrived on staple crop production.

The English Colonies - Northern

What later became the northern states:
New England’s most important and first colony was Massachusetts, settled in 1620 by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony. There were two groups of settlers who came to this area of New England.

1. The Pilgrims were the first group. They had been separatists from the Church of England, who due to religious persecution, left for the New World via their own resources and without a charter. They set sail for Virginia, but having been blown off course, they ended up in New England. Upon arrival, and before disembarking the Mayflower, the settlers signed the Mayflower Compact, in which they agreed to obey their own laws, in order to prevent anarchy. The first year in Plymouth Plantation (Plantation was also another word for colony) was hard with many deaths from disease, but the location of Plymouth was in a good area, as the land was cleared by Native Americans. Plus, they were located upon a hill and had fresh water. They relied upon the assistance of Squanto in order to cultivate, trap, and survive. As per the Native and Christian traditions of the era, the Pilgrims called for a thanksgiving, which was commonplace to do in Europe, in November of 1661. The goals of this community were clear. They came to the New World in order to take a stand against the corruption they saw in Europe, and to fight against the moral vices of the Old World.

2. The Puritans were those wanting to purify the Church of England and were the second group settling the area. They too fled England due to religious persecution, but they acquired a
charter from the king in 1629. They settled Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, absorbing the Pilgrim population. By the End of 1630, they numbered approximately 2,000. They had a successful colonial experience, having learned from other colonials that it was necessary to bring: food, medicine, tools, seeds, clothing, weapons, money, and families to the New World. Within 10 years the colony’s population increased to 20,000. Similar to the Pilgrims, the Puritans wanted to be an example of proper living to the world. They believed that they were a special, chosen people whose communal destiny it was to save the world from its sins. Using the image from the Bible of a “City Upon a Hill,” they intended to show the Old World, by example, how people should live. In order to accomplish this goal, everyone within Puritan society had to follow the same rules and dictates. Thus, the form of government established was a theocracy (church and state were one), and its leader was John Winthrop. Winthrop and his supporters were strict, and all dissension was dealt with harshly (by today’s standards) by these authorities. Those who did not chose to leave the colony were made public examples. In the 1630s, the two main examples of dissenters in New England were: Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, who both wanted: the right to worship and speak freely, the separation of church and state, & the people’s will to govern. Williams also wanted colonial payment for Native lands, while Hutchinson broke ranks by preaching the gospel to both men and women. Williams fled upon threats of arrest and established Rhode Island, while Hutchinson was tried and banished to Rhode Island. She later died on Long Island, New York. Note: The other New England colonies, not discussed here, followed similar patterns of economic and cultural development, due to the region’s geography.

New York became an English colony in 1674, after the English took control of the colony from the Dutch, James, Duke of York, ruled it as an absolute monarch. However, religious toleration was guaranteed, and the retention of local governments mollified the pre-existing Dutch population, thus stabilizing English control. Due to its location and ports, a variety of settlers from all over Europe went to New York, such as the Germans, Dutch, French, English, etc..., and Africans also were part of the colony’s ethnically and religiously diverse population. A good number of the population made its wealth via trade and merchant activity. By 1685, New York’s population grew to approximately 30,000, which was 4 times greater than in 1674.

New Jersey was established 1685 by John Berkeley and George Carteret. It became a Quaker and then later a Royal Colony. The settlers to the area were similar to in New York, but without a natural port, New Jersey remained a colony of smaller farmers.
Pennsylvania and Delaware were established 1681 by William Penn as a haven for Quakers, who were one of the Reformation groups being persecuted in Europe. Penn determined that representative government and religious toleration for all Christians would be in place. Also, Penn believed that the Native Americans should be treated well, respected, and dealt with honestly. This practice basically lasted until Penn’s death, after which relations with the Native Americans deteriorated due to white land-hunger. Note: Delaware came out of Pennsylvania’s charter and had the same governor until the Revolution, later we will consider it a Southern state.

Education & Umbrella Experiences

Education:
The colonies differed greatly on attitudes toward public education. New England led educationally, since Puritan theology dictated that people had to be literate in order to read the Bible. Thus, schools were established at the grammar, secondary, and collegiate levels. Laws in these colonies supported this cultural emphasis on literacy. By law once a community had 50 households they had to have a teacher; and once they had 100 households they had to have a school house. In higher education the following schools were established early on, indicating the importance of higher education to these colonists: Harvard College, Mass. (1636), Yale College, Conn. (1701), Brown College, RI (1764).

The Middle Colonies (which later became part of the northern states) were not as advanced with establishing educational institutions as New England. In the mid-18th century no public, secondary or grammar schools existed, but there were private academies. Later, though, by the start of the 19th century, the number of public school increased. However, in terms of higher education, the Middle Colonies had to offer: College of New Jersey (1746), College of Philadelphia (1755), Rutgers, NY (1766), and King’s College (1750).

The South dramatically lagged behind educationally. Southerners did not see the need for nor encouraged public education. Private education existed only for the wealthy, who hired tutors or sent their children to private academies in the North or Europe. Unlike in New England, women did not have publicly supported opportunities for education. Black slaves were kept uneducated, even by law. In the South rates of white illiteracy also were quite high. For example in Virginia in 1700, 90% of men and women could not sign their names. In higher education only the College of William and Mary, Virginia (1693) existed regionally.

Umbrella Issues:
There were 3 “Umbrella” experiences uniting the colonies during prior to the Revolution. Despite the culturally unifying nature of these events, the colo-
nies still retained their individual identities, just like 2 people standing under an umbrella. An American sense of identity developed as a result of these experiences, but it did not mean that sectional differences were erased. Very important to your understanding of American history to 1865 (and sectionalism as the theme of the class) is the Enlightenment and the key concepts associated with it.

- **The Enlightenment** (1600s-1700s) was an intellectual movement in which the educated classes of Europe and later the New World examined life via the “cult of reason,” which taught that the human race improved itself via study, investigation, and reasoning. Every facet of human life was examined, and intellectuals determined that there were “natural laws” governing all aspects of existence. For example Isaac Newton in 1687 published a booklet called the “Principles of Mathematics,” in which he explained the law of gravity in the universe. As many thinkers saw it, the laws of the universe also applied to the human political condition. As a key thinker of the era, John Locke promoted that all men were born with the natural rights of life, liberty, and property. And, he also purported the concept to social contract, which was the agreement between the governed and the government, under which they chose to live, for the governed to follow the laws and leadership of the government and for the government to protect the governed’s natural rights from internal and external violations. If the government did not do so OR if it violated these natural rights then the governed had the right to revolution.

- In the colonies, the people of the “Revolutionary Generation” grew up during the Enlightenment, were students of the great thinkers of that era, and in particular understood John Locke’s theories. They applied Enlightenment philosophies to political thought and action. The ideas of the Enlightenment and John Locke worked into the popular culture, from the top rungs of society down to the common person, and became the philosophical justification for the American Revolution and later the Civil War (when later the North’s and South’s interpretations of the social contract of the Constitution clashed).

- **Great Awakening** (1700s) was a time of religious revival and an expansion of spiritual consciousness. No one in the colonies escaped its influence, which was unilateral, impacting all classes. The two most famous speakers were Jonathan Edwards from New England, who gave sermons designed to scare people away from sin, and George Whitefield from England, who was one of the greatest speakers of the Great Awakening. These men were well-known in the colonies, traveling through to spread their messages for salvation. The emphasis of the Great Awakening was personal and appealed to peoples’ emotions. There
was an emphasis placed upon the individual’s relationship with God. Religion was in the grasp of the average soul, and because of this fact, new denominations arose, providing new leadership opportunities for the common person. This was a democratizing trend in the colonies, and the Great Awakening was a socially unifying bond for colonial Americans that also facilitated the coming of the Revolution.

- The **Coming of the Revolution** unified Americans, because England was an external threat to the security, economic activities, and natural rights of all colonial citizenry. (The specifics of the events preceding the Revolution will be studied separately.)

**Africa & European Slave Trade**

**A history of the Africa and the European slave Trade:**

European contact with Africa existed before the slave trade. Some of the world’s greatest ancient civilizations existed in Africa, which was a diverse continent of many peoples and cultures. Africa had a history of higher education in the ancient city of Timbuktu and the University of Sankore, at which individuals studied medicine, architecture, philosophy, and law. Slavery was part of African culture, but it was non-racial. The enslaved usually were taken captive in warfare, and generally were treated kindly, as if they were members of the family. However, slaves were traded from family to family, as economic needs arose. Through this system of exchanges, the coastal demand for slaves in Africa was met. With the advent of the Atlantic slave trade, coastal West African Kings traded the slaves to Europeans for goods such as guns and rum. This was part of what was called the triangle trade between the Americas and Africa. The demand for slaves caused by the European slave trade encouraged tribal kings to make war for the purpose of acquiring slaves to be sold to the Europeans. This decimated the young and strong populations of Africans, as these were the individuals most desired by the Europeans. The Atlantic slave trade forever altered societal, demographic, economic, and political operations on the continent of Africa. As you can see, slavery was not new to the world or to America:

- Ancient Israelites enslaved the Egyptians; Greeks enslaved Barbarians
- Romans enslaved Greeks; Vikings enslaved Irish and Russian peoples;
- Latin Christians enslaved Balkan Slavs’ (hence the word “slave”) and
- Non-Latin Christians; Christians enslaved Muslims; Muslims enslaved Christians (i.e. Capt. John Smith in Turkey); and Africans enslaved Africans.

The historical justifications for slavery were many: (Note: This list recounts them as they were used historically. It is not an any way an attempt to criticize modern adherents to any of these religions.) A
major reason given was that it was God’s will and sanctioned in the Bible or Qur’an. Both Christians and Muslims argued that whomever warred against the true faith deserved enslavement. Another argument was that it was a fact of life, while biblically, the interpretations were based on some of the following:

- Noah cursed his son’s lineage into slavery
- Paul told slaves to obey their masters
- Deuteronomy 20:11 - “And it shall come about, if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then it will be all people found in it shall become forced labor and shall serve you.
- Leviticus 25:44 - “You may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you”
- Ephesians 6: 5 - “Slaves be obedient to those who are your masters according to flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.”

In the New World, Europeans were the first to turn people into a commodity during the Commercial Revolution of the Renaissance. Later, the demand for slaves remained high due to the production of Staple Crops, such as sugar and tobacco. Columbus enslaved Native Americans. Later, Spain officially abandoned the practice. The English after defeating the Powhatan Indians in 1622 said the Indians were “now most justly be compelled to servitude and drudgery.” In Puritan New England, whites enslaved Algonquians after King Philip’s War (1675-76) and sent them to Carolina and the West Indies to work. Almost every European country was involved to some extent in the slave trade. However, Europe itself was not a market for slaves due to the high rates of unemployment in there. Thus the New World, with its large plantations, became the key market for slaves. The English settlers however did not bring slavery with them to the New World (as previously mentioned). They developed the institution in America. Later, Black Codes were established to control the massive slave population. Thus, Barbados became as North America would too, a slave society in which the structure of the culture, economy, and political institutions was linked to the use of slaves as a labor force. Massachusetts established a slave law in circa. 1640 which read “there shall never be any bond-slavery, . . . unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves, or are sold to us; and such shall have the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israeli concerning such persons doth morally require, provide, this exempts none from servitude who shall be judged thereto by Authority (God).” In 1672 Charles II of England established the ROYAL AFRICAN COMPANY, which eventually held a monopoly on the slave trade.

For the persons forced to make the voyage from Africa to the New World, the voyage was horrific. Slave vessels held approximately 500 people per trip, plus
The longest part of the voyage was called the Middle Passage, in which great suffering occurred for the captives. Africans resisted enslavement, with an estimated 55 mutinies between 1700 and 1860; most failed. It was difficult to revolt on the high seas. Later rebellions occurred in the New World, such as the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739. In this event, about 150 slaves rebelled killing many whites and moving from plantation to plantation gathering weapons and supplies. The rebellion failed when the slaves rested to celebrate their successes and were caught. The leaders were executed as examples for others. As a result of this rebellion, colonial Southerners implemented Black Codes to control the slave population. For example, slaves could not carry weapons, leave plantations without passes, or strike a white even in self-defense. With the adoption of Black Codes, Southerners made another step toward creating a Slave Society in the South.

The number of slaves transported from Africa to the entire New World (both hemispheres) was estimated at 9,566,000, which was the largest forced migration in history. It is estimated that 4,700,000 went to South America, 4,040,000 went to the West Indies, and 399,000 went to the British Colonies (future United States). Black majorities appeared in the colonies as early as 1708. By 1740, the majorities were strong, even with slaves dying at a rate faster than they were imported. By 1790 the domestic slave population sustained itself, and the domestic slave trade dominated over the international slave trade, which officially ended in 1808.

A NOTE on RACE LANGUAGE and THIS COURSE: Please note that historically African-Americans have been referred to by a variety of terms. Most of these are not acceptable today, such as those starting with the letter “N.” In this class, students should use the terms “African-American” or “black.” And, overall, do not make derogatory remarks or use stereotyping references and slang regarding any racial, gender, or ethnic group.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
IV. Spanish Exploration and Conquest

As news of the Spanish conquest spread, wealth-hungry Spaniards poured into the New World seeking land and gold and titles. A New World empire spread from Spain’s Caribbean foothold. Motives were plain: said one soldier, “we came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich.” Mercenaries joined the conquest and raced to capture the human and material wealth of the New World.

The Spanish managed labor relations through a legal system known as the *encomienda*, an exploitive feudal arrangement in which Spain tied Indian laborers to vast estates. In the *encomienda*, the Spanish crown granted a person not only land but a specified number of natives as well. *Encomenderos* brutalized their laborers with punishing labor. After Bartolome de Las Casas published his incendiary account of Spanish abuses (*The Destruction of the Indies*), Spanish authorities abolished the *encomienda* in 1542 and replaced it with the *repartimiento*. Intended as a milder system, the repartimiento nevertheless replicated many of the abuses of the older system and the rapacious exploitation of the native population continued as Spain spread its empire over the Americas.
As Spain’s New World empire expanded, Spanish conquerors met the massive empires of Central and South America, civilizations that dwarfed anything found in North America. In central America the Maya built massive temples, sustained large populations, and constructed a complex and long-lasting civilization with a written language, advanced mathematics, and stunningly accurate calendars. But Maya civilization, although it had not disappeared, nevertheless collapsed before European arrival, likely due to droughts and unsustainable agricultural practices. But the eclipse of the Maya only heralded the later rise of the most powerful native civilization ever seen in the Western Hemisphere: the Aztecs.

Militaristic migrants from northern Mexico, the Aztecs moved south into the Valley of Mexico, conquered their way to dominance, and built the largest empire in the New World. When the Spaniards arrived in Mexico they found a sprawling civilization centered around Tenochtitlan, an awe-inspiring city built on a series of natural and man-made islands in the middle of Lake Texcoco, located today within modern-day Mexico City. Tenochtitlan, founded in 1325, rivaled the world’s largest cities in size and grandeur. Much of the city was built on large artificial islands called *chinampas* which the Aztecs constructed by dredging mud and rich sediment from the bottom of the lake and depositing it over time to form new landscapes. A massive pyramid temple, the Templo Mayor, was located at the city center (its ruins can still be found in the center of Mexico City). When the Spaniards arrived they could scarcely believe what they saw: 70,000 buildings, housing perhaps 200,000-250,000 people, all built on a lake and connected by causeways and canals. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of Cortez’s soldiers, later recalled, “When we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments … Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream? … I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about.”

From their island city the Aztecs dominated an enormous swath of central and southern Mesoamerica. They ruled their empire through a decentralized network of subject peoples that paid regular tribute—including everything from the most basic items, such as corn, beans, and other foodstuffs, to luxury goods such as jade, cacao, and gold—and provided troops for the empire. But unrest festered beneath the Aztec’s imperial power and European conquerors lusted after its vast wealth.

Hernan Cortes, an ambitious, thirty-four year old Spaniard who had won riches in the conquest of Cuba, organized an invasion of Mexico in 1519. Sailing with 600 men, horses, and cannon, he landed on the coast of Mexico. Relying on a native translator, whom he called Doña Marina, and whom Mexican
folklore denounces as *La Malinche*, Cortes gathered information and allies in preparation for conquest. Through intrigue, brutality, and the exploitation of endemic political divisions, he enlisted the aid of thousands of native allies, defeated Spanish rivals, and marched on Tenochtitlan. Aztec dominance rested upon fragile foundations and many of the region’s semi-independent city-states yearned to break from Aztec rule while nearby kingdoms, including Tarascans to the north, and the remains of Maya city-states on the Yucatán peninsula, chafed at Aztec power.

Through persuasion, and maybe because some Aztecs thought Cortes was the god Quetzalcoatl, the Spaniards entered Tenochtitlán peacefully. Cortes then captured the emperor Montezuma and used him to gain control of the Aztecs’ gold and silver reserves and its network of mines. Eventually, the Aztecs revolted. Montezuma was branded a traitor and uprising ignited the city. Montezuma was killed along with a third of Cortes’s men in *la noche triste*, the “night of sorrows.” The Spanish fought through thousands of indigenous insurgents and across canals to flee the city, where they regrouped, enlisted more native allies, captured Spanish reinforcements, and, in 1521, besieged the island city. The Spaniard’s eighty-five day siege cut off food and fresh water. Smallpox ravaged the city. One Spanish observer said it “spread over the people as great destruction. Some it covered on all parts—their faces, their heads, their breasts, and so on. There was great havoc. Very many died of it … They could not move; they could not stir.” Cortes, the Spaniards, and their native allies then sacked the city. 15,000 died. The temples were unmade. After two years of conflict, a million-person strong empire was toppled by disease, dissension, and a thousand European conquerors.

Further south, along the Andes Mountains in South America, the Quechuas, or Incas, managed a vast mountain empire. From their capital of Cuzco in the Andean highlands, through conquest and negotiation, the Inca built an empire that stretched around the western half of the South American continent from present day Ecuador to central Chile and Argentina. They built steppes to farm fertile mountain soil and by the 1400s they managed a thousand miles of Andean roads that tied together perhaps twelve million people. But like the Aztecs, unrest between the Incas and conquered groups created tensions and left the empire vulnerable to foreigners. Smallpox spread in advance of Spanish conquerors and hit
the Incan empire in 1525. Epidemics ravaged the population, cutting the empire’s population in half, killing the Incan emperor Huayna Capac and many members of his family and sparking a bloody war of succession. Inspired by Cortes’s conquest of Mexico, Francisco Pizzaro moved South and arrived amid an empire torn by chaos. With 168 men, he deceived Incan rulers and took control of the empire and seized the capital city, Cuzco, in 1533. Disease, conquest, and slavery ravaged the remnants of the Incan empire.

After the conquests of Mexico and Peru, Spain settled into their new empire. A vast administrative hierarchy governed the new holdings: royal appointees oversaw an enormous territory of landed estates and Indian laborers and administrators regulated the extraction of gold and silver and oversaw their transport across the Atlantic in Spanish galleons. Meanwhile Spanish migrants poured into the New World. 225,000 migrated during the sixteenth century alone, and 750,000 came during the entire three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Spaniards, often single, young, and male, emigrated for the various promises of land, wealth, and social advancement. Laborers, craftsmen, soldiers, clerks, and priests all crossed the Atlantic in large numbers. Indians, however, always outnumbered the Spanish and the Spaniards, by both necessity and design, incorporated native Americans—unequally—into colonial life.

An elaborate racial hierarchy marked Spanish life in the New World. Regularized in the mid-1600s but rooted in medieval practices, the Sistema de Castas organized individuals into various racial groups based upon their supposed “purity of blood.” Various classifications—often elaborately arrived at—became almost prerequisites for social and political advancement in Spanish colonial society. Peninsulares—Iberian-born Spaniards, or Españoles—occupied the highest levels of administration and acquired the greatest estates. Their descendants, New World-born Spaniards, or criollos, occupied the next rung and rivaled the peninsulares for wealth and opportunity. Mestizos—a term used to describe those of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage—followed.

Like the French later in North America, the Spanish tolerated and sometimes even supported interracial marriage. There were simply too few Spanish women in the New World to support the natural growth of a purely Spanish population. The Catholic Church endorsed interracial marriage as a moral bulwark against bastardy and rape. As early as 1533, King
Carlos I declared that any child with Spanish blood “to the half” was entitled to certain Spanish rights. By 1600, mestizos made up a large portion of the colonial population. By the early 1700s, more than one-third of all marriages bridged the Spanish-Indian divide. Largely separated by wealth and influence from the peninsulares and criollos, however, mestizos typically occupied a middling social position in Spanish New World society. They were not quite Indios, or Indians, but their lack of limpieza de sangre, or “pure blood,” removed them from the privileges of full-blooded Spaniards. Spanish fathers of sufficient wealth and influence might shield their mestizo children from racial prejudice, and a number of wealthy mestizos married Españoles to “whiten” their family lines, but more often mestizos were confined to a middle-station in the Spanish New World.

Slaves and Indians occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder. After Bartolome de las Casas and other reformers shamed the Spanish for their harsh Indian policies in the 1530s, the Spanish outlawed Indian slavery. In the 1550s, the encomienda system of land-based forced-labor gave way to the repartimiento, an exploitative but slightly softer form of forced wage-labor. Slaves labored especially on Spain’s Caribbean plantation islands.

Many manipulated the Casta System to gain advantages for themselves and their children. Mestizo mothers, for instance, might insist that their mestizo daughters were actually castizas, or quarter-Indians, who, if they married a Spaniard, could, in the eyes of the law, produce “pure” criollo children entitled to the full rights and opportunities of Spanish citizens. But “passing” was an option for the few. Instead, the massive native populations within Spain’s New World Empire ensured a level of cultural and racial mixture—or Mestizaje—unparalleled in British North America. Spanish North America wrought a hybrid culture that was neither fully Spanish nor fully Indian. The Spanish not only built Mexico City atop Tenochtitlán, but food, language, and families spilled across racial barriers. In 1531, a poor Indian named Juan Diego reported that he was visited by the Virgin Mary, who came as a dark-skinned Nahuatl-speaking Indian. Reports of miracles spread across Mexico and the Virgen de Guadalupe became a national icon for a new mestizo society.
From Mexico, Spain expanded northward. Lured by the promises of gold and another Tenochtitlán, Spanish expeditions scoured North America for another wealthy Indian empire. Huge expeditions, resembling vast moving communities, composed of hundreds of soldiers, settlers, priests, and slaves, with enormous numbers of livestock, moved across the continent. Juan Ponce de Leon, the conqueror of Puerto Rico, landed in Florida in 1513 in search of wealth and slaves. Cabeza de Vaca joined the Narvaez expedition to Florida a decade later, was shipwrecked, and embarked upon a remarkable multi-year odyssey across the Gulf of Mexico and Texas into Mexico. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, and it remains the oldest, continuously occupied European settlement in the present-day United States.

But without the rich gold and silver mines of Mexico, the plantation-friendly climate of the Caribbean, or the exploitive potential of large Indian empires, North America offered little incentive for Spanish officials. Still, Spanish expeditions combed North America. Francisco Vazquez de Coronado pillaged his way across the Southwest. Hernando De Soto tortured and raped and enslaved his way across the Southeast. Soon Spain had footholds—however tenuous—across much of the continent.

Content provided by The American Yawp
I. Introduction

The Columbian Exchange transformed both sides of the Atlantic, but with dramatically disparate outcomes. New diseases wiped out entire civilizations in the Americas, while newly imported nutrient-rich foodstuffs enabled a European population boom. Spain benefited most immediately as the wealth of the Aztec and Incan Empires strengthened the Spanish monarchy. Spain used its new riches to gain an advantage over other European nations, but this advantage was soon contested.

Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England all raced to the New World, eager to match the gains of the Spanish. Native peoples greeted the new visitors with responses ranging from welcome cooperation to aggressive violence, but the ravages of disease and the possibility of new trading relationships enabled Europeans to create settlements all along the western rim of the Atlantic world. New empires would emerge from these tenuous beginnings, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Spain would lose its privileged position to its rivals. An age of colonization had begun and, with it, a great collision of cultures commenced.
II. Spanish America

Spain extended its reach in the Americas after reaping the benefits of its colonies in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America. Expeditions slowly began combining the continent and bringing Europeans into the modern-day United States in the hopes of establishing religious and economic dominance in a new territory. Juan Ponce de Leon arrived in the area named “La Florida” in 1513. He found between 150,000 and 300,000 Native Americans. But then two-and-a-half centuries of contact with European and African peoples—whether through war, slave raids, or, most dramatically, foreign disease—decimated Florida’s indigenous population. European explorers, meanwhile, had hoped to find great wealth in Florida, but reality never aligned with their imaginations.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Spanish colonizers fought frequently with Florida’s native peoples as well as with other Europeans. In the 1560s Spain expelled French Protestants, called Huguenots, from the area near modern-day Jacksonville in northeast Florida. In 1586 English privateer Sir Francis Drake burned the wooden settlement of St. Augustine. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Spain’s reach in Florida extended from the mouth of the St. Johns River south to the environs of St. Augustine—an area of roughly 1,000 square miles. The Spaniards attempted to duplicate methods for establishing control used previously in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Andes. The Crown granted missionaries the right to live among Timucua and Guale villagers in the late 1500s and early 1600s and encouraged settlement through the encomienda system (grants of Indian labor).

In the 1630s, the mission system extended into the Apalachec district in the Florida panhandle. The Apalachec, one of the most powerful tribes in Florida at the time of contact, claimed the territory from the modern Florida-Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. Apalachec farmers grew an abundance of corn and other crops. Indian traders carried surplus products east along the Camino Real, the royal road that connected the western anchor of the mission system with St. Augustine. Spanish settlers drove cattle eastward across the St. Johns River and established ranches as far west as Apalachec. Still, Spain held Florida tenuously.

Further west, Juan de Oñate led 400 settlers, soldiers, and missionaries from Mexico into New Mexico in
1598. The Spanish Southwest had brutal beginnings. When Oñate sacked the Pueblo city of Acoma, the “sky city,” the Spaniards slaughtered nearly half of its roughly 1,500 inhabitants, including women and children. Oñate ordered one foot cut off of every surviving male over 15 and he enslaved the remaining women and children.

Santa Fe, the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, was established in 1610. Few Spaniards relocated to the southwest due to the distance from Mexico City and the dry and hostile environment. Thus, the Spanish never achieved a commanding presence in the region. By 1680, only about 3,000 colonists called Spanish New Mexico home. There, they traded with and exploited the local Puebloan peoples. The region’s Puebloan population had plummeted from as many as 60,000 in 1600 to about 17,000 in 1680.

Spain shifted strategies after the military expeditions wove their way through the southern and western half of North America. Missions became the engine of colonization in North America. Missionaries, most of whom were members of the Franciscan religious order, provided Spain with an advance guard in North America. Catholicism had always justified Spanish conquest, and colonization always carried religious imperatives. By the early seventeenth century, Spanish friars established dozens of missions along the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, and in California.

III. Spain’s Rivals Emerge

While Spain plundered the New World, unrest plagued Europe. The Reformation threw England and France, the two European powers capable of contesting Spain, into turmoil. Long and expensive conflicts drained time, resources, and lives. Millions died from religious violence in France alone. As the violence diminished in Europe, however, religious and political rivalries continued in the New World.

The Spanish exploitation of New Spain’s riches inspired European monarchs to invest in exploration and conquest. Reports of Spanish atrocities spread throughout Europe and provided a humanitarian justification for European colonization. An English reprint of the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas bore the sensational title: “Popery Truly Display’d in its Bloody Colours: Or, a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all manners of Cruelties that Hell and Malice
could invent, committed by the Popish Spanish.” An English writer explained that the Indians “were simple and plain men, and lived without great labour,” but in their lust for gold the Spaniards “forced the people (that were not used to labour) to stand all the daie in the hot sun gathering gold in the sand of the rivers. By this means a great nombre of them (not used to such pains) died, and a great number of them (seeing themselves brought from so quiet a life to such misery and slavery) of desperation killed themselves. And many would not marry, because they would not have their children slaves to the Spaniards.” The Spanish accused their critics of fostering a “Black Legend.” The Black Legend drew on religious differences and political rivalries. Spain had successful conquests in France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands and left many in those nations yearning to break free from Spanish influence. English writers argued that Spanish barbarities were foiling a tremendous opportunity for the expansion of Christianity across the globe and that a benevolent conquest of the New World by non-Spanish monarchies offered the surest salvation of the New World’s pagan masses. With these religious justifications, and with obvious economic motives, Spain’s rivals arrived in the New World.

The French
The French crown subsidized exploration in the early sixteenth century. Early French explorers sought a fabled Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway passing through the North American continent to Asia. Despite the wealth of the New World, Asia’s riches still beckoned to Europeans. Canada’s Saint Lawrence River at first glance appeared to be such a passage, stretching deep into the continent and into the Great Lakes. French colonial possessions centered on these bodies of water (and, later, down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans).

French colonization developed through investment from private trading companies. Traders established Port-Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1603 and launched trading expeditions that stretched down the Atlantic coast as far as Cape Cod. The needs of the fur trade set the future pattern of French colonization. Founded in 1608 under the leadership of Samuel de Champlain, Quebec provided the foothold for what would become New France. French fur traders placed a higher value on cooperating with the Indians than on establishing a successful French colonial footprint. Asserting dominance in the region could have been to their own detriment, as it might have compromised their access to skilled trappers, and therefore wealth. Few Frenchmen traveled to the New World to settle permanently. In fact, few traveled at all. Many persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots) sought to emigrate after France criminalized Protestantism in 1685, but all non-Catholics were forbidden in New France.

The French preference for trade over permanent settlement fostered more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with Native Americans than was typical among the Spanish and English.
Perhaps eager to debunk the anti-Catholic elements of the Black Legend, the French worked to cultivate cooperation with Indians. Jesuit missionaries, for instance, adopted different conversion strategies than the Spanish Franciscans. Spanish missionaries brought Indians into enclosed missions, whereas Jesuits more often lived with or alongside Indian groups. Many French fur traders married Indian women. The offspring of Indian women and French men were so common in New France that the French developed a word for these children, *Métis*(sage). The Huron people developed a particularly close relationship with the French and many converted to Christianity and engaged in the fur trade. But close relationships with the French would come at a high cost. The Huron, for instance, were decimated by the ravages of European disease, and entanglements in French and Dutch conflicts proved disastrous. Despite this, some native peoples maintained distant alliances with the French.

Pressure from the powerful Iroquois in the east pushed many Algonquian-speaking peoples toward French territory in the mid-seventeenth century and together they crafted what historians have called a “middle ground,” where Europeans and natives crafted a kind of cross-cultural space that allowed for native and European interaction, negotiation, and accommodation. French traders adopted—sometimes clumsily—the gift-giving and mediation strategies expected of native leaders and natives engaged the impersonal European market and submitted—often haphazardly—to European laws. The Great Lakes “middle ground” experienced tumultuous success throughout the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries until English colonial officials and American settlers swarmed the region. The pressures of European expansion strained even the closest bonds.

The Dutch

The Netherlands, a small maritime nation with great wealth, achieved considerable colonial success. In 1581, the Netherlands had officially broken away from the Hapsburgs and won a reputation as the freest of the new European nations. Dutch women maintained separate legal identities from their husbands and could therefore hold property and inherit full estates.

Ravaged by the turmoil of the Reformation, the Dutch embraced greater religious tolerance and freedom of the press than other European nations. Radical Protestants, Catholics, and Jews flocked to the Netherlands. The English Pilgrims, for instance, fled first to Holland before sailing to the New World years later. The Netherlands built its colonial empire through the work of experienced merchants and skilled sailors. The Dutch were the most advanced capitalists in the modern world and marshaled extensive financial resources by creating innovative financial organizations such as the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and the East India Company. Although the Dutch offered liberties, they offered very little democracy—power remained in the hands of only a
few. And even Dutch liberties had their limits. The Dutch advanced the slave trade and brought African slaves with them to the New World. Slavery was an essential part of Dutch capitalist triumphs.

Sharing the European hunger for access to Asia, in 1609 the Dutch commissioned the Englishman Henry Hudson to discover the fabled Northwest Passage through North America. He failed, of course, but nevertheless found the Hudson River and claimed modern-day New York for the Dutch. There they established New Netherlands, an essential part of the Netherlands’ New World empire. The Netherlands chartered the Dutch West India Company in 1621 and established colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. The island of Manhattan provided a launching pad from which to support its Caribbean colonies and attack Spanish trade.

Spiteful of the Spanish and mindful of the “Black Legend,” the Dutch were determined not to repeat Spanish atrocities. They fashioned guidelines for New Netherlands that conformed to the ideas of Hugo Grotius, a legal philosopher who believed native peoples possessed the same natural rights as Europeans. Colony leaders insisted that land be purchased; in 1626 Peter Minuit therefore “bought” Manhattan from Munsee Indians. Despite the honorable intentions, it is very likely that the Munsee and the Dutch understood their transaction in very different terms. Transactions like these illustrated both the Dutch attempt to find a more peaceful process of colonization and the inconsistency between European and Native American understandings of property. Like the French, the Dutch sought to profit, not to conquer. Trade with Native peoples became New Netherland’s central economic activity. Dutch traders carried wampum along pre-existing Native trade routes and exchanged it for beaver pelts. Wampum consisted of shell beads fashioned by Algonquian Indians on the southern New England coast, and were valued as a ceremonial and diplomatic commodity among the Iroquois. Wampum became a currency that could buy anything from a loaf of bread to a plot of land.

In addition to developing these trading networks, the Dutch also established farms, settlements, and lumber camps. The West India Company directors implemented the patroon system to encourage colonization. The patroon system granted large estates to wealthy landlords, who subsequently paid passage for the tenants to work their land. Expanding Dutch settlements correlated with deteriorating relations with local Indians. In the interior of the continent the Dutch retained valuable alliances with the Iroquois to maintain Beverwijck, modern-day Albany, as a hub for the fur trade. In the places where the Dutch built permanent settlements, the ideals of peaceful colonization succumbed to the settlers’ increasing demand for land. Armed conflicts erupted as colonial settlements encroached on Native villages and hunting lands. Profit and peace, it seemed, could not coexist.
Labor shortages, meanwhile, crippled Dutch colonization. The patroon system failed to bring enough tenants and the colony could not attract a sufficient number of indentured servants to satisfy the colony’s backers. In response, the colony imported 11 company-owned slaves the same year that Minuit purchased Manhattan. Slaves were tasked with building New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City). They created its roads and maintained its all-important port. Fears of racial mixing led the Dutch to import enslaved women, enabling the formation of African Dutch families. The colony’s first African marriage occurred in 1641, and by 1650 there were at least 500 African slaves in the colony. By 1660 New Amsterdam had the largest urban slave population on the continent.

As was typical of the practice of African slavery in much of the early seventeenth century, Dutch slavery in New Amsterdam was less comprehensively exploitative than later systems of American slavery. Some enslaved Africans, for instance, successfully sued for back wages. When several company-owned slaves fought for the colony against the Munsee Indians, they petitioned for their freedom and won a kind of “half freedom” that allowed them to work their own land in return for paying a large tithe, or tax, to their masters. The children of this “half-free” laborers were held in bondage by the West India Company, however. The Dutch, who so proudly touted their liberties, grappled with the reality of African slavery, and some New Netherlanders protested the enslavement of Christianized Africans. The economic goals of the colony slowly crowded out these cultural and religious objections, and the much boasted liberties of the Dutch came to exist alongside increasingly brutal systems of slavery.

The Portuguese

The Portuguese had been leaders in Atlantic navigation well ahead of Columbus’s voyage. But the incredible wealth flowing from New Spain piqued the rivalry between the two Iberian countries, and accelerated Portuguese colonization efforts. This rivalry created a crisis within the Catholic world as Spain and Portugal squared off in a battle for colonial supremacy. The Pope intervened and divided the New World with the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Land east of the Tordesillas Meridian, an imaginary line dividing South America, would be given to Portugal, whereas land west of the line was reserved for Spanish conquest. In return for the license to conquer, both Portugal and Spain were instructed to treat the natives with Christian compassion and to bring them under the protection of the Church.

Lucrative colonies in Africa and India initially preoccupied Portugal, but by 1530 the Portuguese turned their attention to the land that would become Brazil, driving out French traders and establishing permanent settlements. Gold and silver mines dotted the interior of the colony, but two industries powered early colonial Brazil: sugar and the slave trade. In
fact, over the entire history of the Atlantic slave trade, more Africans were enslaved in Brazil than any other colony in the Atlantic World. Gold mines emerged in greater number throughout the eighteenth century, but still never rivaled the profitability of sugar or slave-trading.

Jesuit missionaries succeeded in bringing Christianity to Brazil, but strong elements of African and native spirituality mixed with orthodox Catholicism to create a unique religious culture. This culture resulted from the demographics of Brazilian slavery. High mortality rates on sugar plantations required a steady influx of new slaves, thus perpetuating the cultural connection between Brazil and Africa. The reliance on new imports of slaves increased the likelihood of resistance, however, and escaped slaves managed to create several free settlements, called quilombos. These settlements drew from both African and Native slaves, and despite frequent attacks, several endured throughout the long history of Brazilian slavery.

Despite the arrival of these new Europeans, Spain continued to dominate the New World. The wealth flowing from the exploitation of the Aztec and Incan Empires greatly eclipsed the profits of other European nations. But this dominance would not last long. By the end of the sixteenth century, the powerful Spanish Armada would be destroyed, and the English would begin to rule the waves.

IV. English Colonization

Spain had a one-hundred year head start on New World colonization and a jealous England eyed the enormous wealth that Spain gleaned from the new World. The Protestant Reformation had shaken England but Elizabeth I assumed the English crown in 1558 and oversaw the expansion of trade and exploration—and the literary achievements of Shakespeare and Marlowe—during England’s so-called “golden age.” English mercantilism, a state-assisted manufacturing and trading system, created and maintained markets, ensured a steady supply of consumers and laborers, stimulated economic expansion, and increased English wealth.

However, wrenching social and economic changes unsettled the English population. The island’s population increased from fewer than three million in 1500 to over five million by the middle of the seventeenth century. The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose but wages stagnated. Moreover,
movements to enclose public land—sparked by the transition of English landholders from agriculture to livestock-raising—evicted tenants from the land and created hordes of landless, jobless peasants that haunted the cities and countryside. One-quarter to one-half of the population lived in extreme poverty.

New World colonization won support in England amid a time of rising English fortunes among the wealthy, a tense Spanish rivalry, and mounting internal social unrest. But English colonization supporters always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God’s work.

Many cited spiritual concerns and argued that colonization would glorify God, England, and Protestantism by Christianizing the New World’s pagan peoples. Advocates such as Richard Hakluyt the Younger and John Dee, for instance, drew upon The History of the Kings of Britain, written by the twelfth century monk Geoffrey of Monmouth, and its mythical account of King Arthur’s conquest and Christianization of pagan lands to justify American conquest. Moreover, promoters promised that the conversion of New World Indians would satisfy God and glorify England’s “Virgin Queen,” Elizabeth I, who was verging on a near-divine image among the English. The English—and other European Protestant colonizers—imagined themselves superior to the Spanish, who still bore the Black Legend of inhuman cruelty. English colonization, supporters argued, would prove that superiority.

In his 1584 “Discourse on Western Planting,” Richard Hakluyt amassed the supposed religious, moral, and exceptional economic benefits of colonization. He repeated the “Black Legend” of Spanish New World terrorism and attacked the sins of Catholic Spain. He promised that English colonization could strike a blow against Spanish heresy and bring Protestant religion to the New World. English interference, Hakluyt suggested, may provide the only salvation from Catholic rule in the New World. The New World, too, he said, offered obvious economic advantages. Trade and resource extraction would enrich the English treasury. England, for instance, could find plentiful materials to outfit a world-class navy. Moreover, he said, the New World could provide an escape for England’s vast armies of landless “vagabonds.” Expanded trade, he argued, would not only bring profit, but also provide work for England’s jobless poor. A Christian enterprise, a blow against Spain, an economic stimulus, and a social safety valve all beckoned the English toward a commitment to colonization.

This noble rhetoric veiled the coarse economic motives that brought England to the New World. New economic structures and a new merchant class paved the way for colonization. England’s merchants lacked estates but they had new plans to build wealth. By collaborating with new government-sponsored trading monopolies and employing financial innovations such as joint-stock companies, England’s merchants sought to improve on the Dutch economic system.
Spain was extracting enormous material wealth from the New World; why shouldn’t England? Joint-stock companies, the ancestors of the modern corporations, became the initial instruments of colonization. With government monopolies, shared profits, and managed risks, these money-making ventures could attract and manage the vast capital needed for colonization. In 1606 James I approved the formation of the Virginia Company (named after Elizabeth, the “Virgin Queen”).

Rather than formal colonization, however, the most successful early English ventures in the New World were a form of state-sponsored piracy known as privateering. Queen Elizabeth sponsored sailors, or “Sea Dogges,” such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to plunder Spanish ships and towns in the Americas. Privateers earned a substantial profit both for themselves and for the English crown. England practiced piracy on a scale, one historian wrote, “that transforms crime into politics.” Francis Drake harried Spanish ships throughout the Western Hemisphere and raided Spanish caravans as far away as the coast of Peru on the Pacific Ocean. In 1580 Elizabeth rewarded her skilled pirate with knighthood. But Elizabeth walked a fine line. Protestant-Catholic tensions already running high, English privateering provoked Spain. Tensions worsened after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain unleashed the fabled Armada, forcing it to retreat to the Netherlands for reinforcements. But then a fluke storm, celebrated in England as the “divine wind,” annihilated the remainder of the fleet. The destruction of the Armada changed the course of world history. It not only saved England and secured English Protestantism, but it also opened the seas to English expansion and paved the way for England’s colonial future. By 1600, England stood ready to embark upon its dominance over North America.

English colonization would look very different from Spanish or French colonization, as was indicated by early experiences with the Irish. England had long been trying to conquer Catholic Ireland. The English used a model of forcible segregation with the Irish that would mirror their future relationships with Native Americans. Rather than integrating with the Irish and trying to convert them to Protestantism, England more often simply seized land through violence and pushed out the former inhabitants, leaving them to move elsewhere or to die.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late-
sixteenth century to establish a colony in New
Foundland but failed. In 1587, with a predominantly
male cohort of 150 English colonizers, John White
reestablished an abandoned settlement on North
Carolina’s Roanoke Island. Supply shortages
prompted White to return to England for additional
support but the Spanish Armada and the mobilization
of British naval efforts stranded him in Britain for
several years. When he finally returned to Roanoke,
he found the colony abandoned. What befell the failed
colony? White found the word “Croatan,” the name of
a nearby island and Indian people, carved into a tree
or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume
the colonists, short of food, may have fled for the
nearby island and its settled native population. Others
offer violence as an explanation. Regardless, the
English colonists were never heard from again. When
Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, no Englishmen had yet
established a permanent North American colony.

After King James made peace with Spain in 1604,
privateering no longer held out the promise of cheap
wealth. Colonization assumed a new urgency. The
Virginia Company, established in 1606, drew inspira-
tion from Cortes and the Spanish conquests. It hoped
to find gold and silver as well as other valuable trad-
ing commodities in the New World: glass, iron, furs,
pitch, tar, and anything else the country could supply.
The Company planned to identify a navigable river
with a deep harbor, away from the eyes of the Span-
ish. There they would find an Indian trading network
and extract a fortune from the New World.

V. Jamestown

In April 1607 Englishmen aboard three ships—the Su-
san Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery—sailed forty
miles up the James River (named for the English
king) in present-day Virginia (Named for Elizabeth
I, the “Virgin Queen”) and settled upon just such a
place. The uninhabited peninsula they selected was
upriver and out of sight of Spanish patrols. It offered
easy defense against ground assaults and was unin-
habited but still located close enough to many Indian
villages and their potentially lucrative trade networks.
But the location was a disaster. Indians ignored the
peninsula because of its terrible soil and its brackish
tidal water that led to debilitating disease. Despite
these setbacks, the English built Jamestown, the first
permanent English colony in the present-day United
States.

The English had not entered a wilderness but had
arrived amid a people they called the Powhatan
Confederacy. Powhatan, or Wahunsenacawh, as he called himself, led nearly 10,000 Algonquian-speaking Indians in the Chesapeake. They burned vast acreage to clear brush and create sprawling artificial park-like grasslands so that they could easily hunt deer, elk, and bison. The Powhatan raised corn, beans, squash, and possibly sunflowers, rotating acreage throughout the Chesapeake. Without plows, manure, or draft animals, the Powhatan achieved a remarkable number of calories cheaply and efficiently.

Jamestown was a profit-seeking venture backed by investors. The colonists were mostly gentlemen and proved entirely unprepared for the challenges ahead. They hoped for easy riches but found none. The peninsula’s location was poisonous and supplies from England were sporadic or spoiled. As John Smith later complained, they “Would rather starve than work.” And so they did. Disease and starvation ravaged the colonists. Fewer than half of the original colonists survived the first nine months.

John Smith, a yeoman’s son and capable leader, took command of the crippled colony and promised, “He that will not work shall not eat.” He navigated Indian diplomacy, claiming that he was captured and sentenced to death but Powhatan’s daughter, Pocahontas, intervened to save his life. She would later marry another colonist, John Rolfe, and die in England.

Powhatan kept the English alive that first winter. The Powhatan had welcomed the English and their manufactured goods. The Powhatan placed a high value on metal axe-heads, kettles, tools, and guns and eagerly traded furs and other abundant goods for them. With 10,000 confederated natives and with food in abundance, the Indians had little to fear and much to gain from the isolated outpost of sick and dying Englishmen.

Despite reinforcements, the English continued to die. Four hundred settlers arrived in 1609 and the overwhelmed colony entered a desperate “starving time” in the winter of 1609-1610. Supplies were lost at sea. Relations with the Indians deteriorated and the colonists fought a kind of slow-burning guerrilla war with the Powhatan. Disaster loomed for the colony. The settlers ate everything they could, roaming the woods for nuts and berries. They boiled leather. They dug up graves to eat the corpses of their former neighbors. One man was executed for killing and eating his wife. Some years later, George Percy recalled the colonists’ desperation during these years, when he served as the colony’s president: “Having fed upon our horses and other beasts as long as they lasted, we were glad to make shift with vermin as dogs, cats, rats and mice … as to eat boots shoes or any other leather … And now famine beginning to look ghastly and pale in every face, that nothing was spared to maintain life and to doe those things which seem incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of
graves and to eat them.” Archaeological excavations in 2012 exhumed the bones of a fourteen-year-old girl that exhibited the telltale signs of cannibalism. All but 60 settlers would die by the summer of 1610.

Little improved over the next several years. By 1616, 80 percent of all English immigrants that arrived in Jamestown had perished. England’s first American colony was a catastrophe. The colony was reorganized and in 1614 the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe eased relations with the Powhatan, though the colony still limped along as a starving, commercially disastrous tragedy. The colonists were unable to find any profitable commodities and they still depended upon the Indians and sporadic shipments from England for food. But then tobacco saved Jamestown.

By the time King James I described tobacco as a “noxious weed, … loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, and dangerous to the lungs,” it had already taken Europe by storm. In 1616 John Rolfe crossed tobacco strains from Trinidad and Guiana and planted Virginia’s first tobacco crop. In 1617 the colony sent its first cargo of tobacco back to England. The “noxious weed,” a native of the New World, fetched a high price in Europe and the tobacco boom began in Virginia and then later spread to Maryland. Within fifteen years American colonists were exporting over 500,000 pounds of tobacco per year. Within forty, they were exporting fifteen million.

Tobacco changed everything. It saved Virginia from ruin, incentivized further colonization, and laid the groundwork for what would become the United States. With a new market open, Virginia drew not only merchants and traders, but also settlers. Colonists came in droves. They were mostly young, mostly male, and mostly indentured servants, who signed contracts, called indentures that bonded them to employers for a period of years in return for passage across the ocean. But even the rough terms of servitude were no match for the promise of land and potential profits that beckoned ambitious and dispossessed English farmers alike. But still there were not enough of them. Tobacco was a labor-intensive crop and ambitious planters, with seemingly limitless land before them, lacked only laborers to exponentially escalate their wealth and status. The colony’s great labor vacuum inspired the creation of the “headright policy” in 1618: any person who migrated to Virginia would automatically receive 50 acres of land and any immigrant whose passage they paid would entitled them to 50 acres more.

In 1619 the Virginia Company established the House of Burgesses, a limited representative body composed of white landowners that first met in Jamestown. That same year, a Dutch slave ship sold 20 Africans to the Virginia colonists. Southern slavery was born.

Soon the tobacco-growing colonists expanded beyond the bounds of Jamestown’s deadly peninsula. When it
became clear that the English were not merely intent on maintaining a small trading post, but sought a permanent ever-expanding colony, conflict with the Powhatan Confederacy became almost inevitable. Powhatan died in 1622 and was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough, who promised to drive the land-hungry colonists back into the sea. He launched a surprise attack and in a single day (March 22, 1622) killed 347 colonists, or one-fourth of all the colonists in Virginia. The colonists retaliated and revisited the massacres upon Indian settlements many times over. The massacre freed the colonists to drive the Indians off their land. The governor of Virginia declared it colonial policy to achieve the “expulsion of the savages to gain the free range of the country.” War and disease destroyed the remnants of the Chesapeake Indians and tilted the balance of power decisively toward the English colonizers, whose foothold in the New World would cease to be as tenuous and challenged.

English colonists brought to the New World particular visions of racial, cultural, and religious supremacy. Despite starving in the shadow of the Powhatan Confederacy, English colonists nevertheless judged themselves physically, spiritually, and technologically superior to native peoples in North America. Christianity, metallurgy, intensive agriculture, trans-Atlantic navigation, and even wheat all magnified the English sense of superiority. This sense of superiority, when coupled with outbreaks of violence, left the English feeling entitled to indigenous lands and resources.

Spanish conquerors established the framework for the Atlantic slave trade over a century before the first chained Africans arrived at Jamestown. Even Bartolomé de las Casas, celebrated for his pleas to save Native Americans from colonial butchery, for a time recommended that indigenous labor be replaced by importing Africans. Early English settlers from the Caribbean and Atlantic coast of North America mostly imitated European ideas of African inferiority. “Race” followed the expansion of slavery across the Atlantic world. Skin-color and race suddenly seemed fixed. Englishmen equated Africans with categorical blackness and blackness with Sin, “the handmaid and symbol of baseness.” An English essayist in 1695 wrote that “A negro will always be a negro, carry him to Greenland, feed him chalk, feed and manage him never so many ways.” More and more Europeans embraced the notions that Europeans and Africans were of distinct races. Others now preached that the Old Testament God cursed Ham, the son of Noah, and doomed blacks to perpetual enslavement.

And yet in the early years of American slavery, ideas about race were not yet fixed and the practice of slavery was not yet codified. The first generations of Africans in English North America faced miserable conditions but, in contrast to later American history, their initial servitude was not necessarily permanent, heritable, or even particularly disgraceful. Africans were definitively set apart as fundamentally different from their white counterparts, and faced longer terms of service and harsher punishments, but, like
the indentured white servants whisked away from English slums, these first Africans in North America could also work for only a set number of years before becoming free landowners themselves. The Angolan Anthony Johnson, for instance, was sold into servitude but fulfilled his indenture and became a prosperous tobacco planter himself.

In 1622, at the dawn of the tobacco boom, Jamestown had still seemed a failure. But the rise of tobacco and the destruction of the Powhatan turned the tide. Colonists escaped the deadly peninsula and immigrants poured into the colony to grow tobacco and turn a profit for the Crown.

VI. New England

The English colonies in New England established from 1620 onward were founded with loftier goals than those in Virginia. Although migrants to New England expected economic profit, religious motives directed the rhetoric and much of the reality of these colonies. Not every English person who moved to New England during the seventeenth century was a Puritan, but Puritans dominated the politics, religion, and culture of New England. Even after 1700, the region’s Puritan inheritance shaped many aspects of its history.

The term Puritan began as an insult, and its recipients usually referred to each other as “the godly” if they used a specific term at all. Puritans believed that the Church of England did not distance itself far enough from Catholicism after Henry VIII broke with Rome in the 1530s. They largely agreed with European Calvinists—followers of theologian Jean Calvin—on matters of religious doctrine. Calvinists (and Puritans) believed that mankind was redeemed by God’s Grace alone, and that the fate of an individual’s immortal soul was predestined. The happy minority God had already chosen to save were known among English Puritans as the Elect. Calvinists also argued that the decoration of churches, reliance on ornate ceremony, and (they argued) corrupt priesthood obscured God’s message. They believed that reading the Bible promised the best way to understand God.

Puritans were stereotyped by their enemies as dour killjoys, and the exaggeration has endured. It is certainly true that the Puritans’ disdain for excess and opposition to many holidays popular in Europe (including Christmas, which, as Puritans never tired of reminding everyone, the Bible never told anyone to
celebrate) lent themselves to caricature. But Puritans understood themselves as advocating a reasonable middle path in a corrupt world. It would never occur to a Puritan, for example, to abstain from alcohol or sex.

During the first century after the English Reformation (c.1530-1630) Puritans sought to “purify” the Church of England of all practices that smacked of Catholicism, advocating a simpler worship service, the abolition of ornate churches, and other reforms. They had some success in pushing the Church of England in a more Calvinist direction, but with the coronation of King Charles I (r. 1625-1649), the Puritans gained an implacable foe that cast English Puritans as excessive and dangerous. Facing growing persecution, the Puritans began the Great Migration, during which about 20,000 people traveled to New England between 1630 and 1640. The Puritans (unlike the small band of separatist “Pilgrims” who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620) remained committed to reforming the Church of England, but temporarily decamped to North America to accomplish this task. Leaders like John Winthrop insisted they were not separating from, or abandoning, England, but were rather forming a godly community in America, that would be a “Shining City on a Hill” and an example for reformers back home. The Puritans did not seek to create a haven of religious toleration, a notion that they—along with nearly all European Christians—regarded as ridiculous at best, and dangerous at worst.

While the Puritans did not succeed in building a godly utopia in New England, a combination of Puritan traits with several external factors created colonies wildly different from any other region settled by English people. Unlike those heading to Virginia, colonists in New England (Plymouth [1620], Massachusetts Bay [1630], Connecticut [1636], and Rhode Island [1636]) generally arrived in family groups. The majority of New England immigrants were small landholders in England, a class contemporary English called the “middling sort.” When they arrived in New England they tended to replicate their home environments, founding towns comprised of independent landholders. The New England climate and soil made large-scale plantation agriculture impractical, so the system of large landholders using masses of slaves or indentured servants to grow labor-intensive crops never took hold.

There is no evidence that the New England Puritans would have opposed such a system were it possible; other Puritans made their fortunes on the Caribbean sugar islands, and New England merchants profited as suppliers of provisions and slaves to those colonies. By accident of geography as much as by design, then, New England society was much less stratified than any of Britain’s other seventeenth-century colonies.

Although New England colonies could boast wealthy landholding elites, the disparity of wealth in the region remained narrow compared to the Chesapeake,
Carolina, or the Caribbean. Instead, seventeenth-century New England was characterized by a broadly-shared modest prosperity based on a mixed economy dependent on small farms, shops, fishing, lumber, shipbuilding, and trade with the Atlantic World.

A combination of environmental factors and the Puritan social ethos produced a region of remarkable health and stability during the seventeenth century. New England immigrants avoided most of the deadly outbreaks of tropical disease that turned Chesapeake colonies into graveyards. Disease, in fact, only aided English settlement and relations to Native Americans. In contrast to other English colonists who had to contend with powerful Native American neighbors, the Puritans confronted the stunned survivors of a biological catastrophe. A lethal pandemic of smallpox during the 1610s swept away as much as 90 percent of the region’s Native American population. Many survivors welcomed the English as potential allies against rival tribes who had escaped the catastrophe. The relatively healthy environment coupled with political stability and the predominance of family groups among early immigrants allowed the New England population to grow to 91,000 people by 1700 from only 21,000 immigrants. In contrast, 120,000 English went to the Chesapeake, and only 85,000 white colonists remained in 1700.

The New England Puritans set out to build their utopia by creating communities of the godly. Groups of men, often from the same region of England, applied to the colony’s General Court for land grants. They generally divided part of the land for immediate use while keeping much of the rest as “commons” or undivided land for future generations. The town’s inhabitants collectively decided the size of each settler’s home lot based on their current wealth and status. Besides oversight of property, the town restricted membership, and new arrivals needed to apply for admission. Those who gained admittance could participate in town governments that, while not democratic by modern standards, nevertheless had broad popular involvement. All male property holders could vote in town meetings and choose the selectmen, assessors, constables, and other officials from among themselves to conduct the daily affairs of government. Upon their founding, towns wrote covenants, reflecting the Puritan belief in God’s covenant with His people. Towns sought to arbitrate disputes and contain strife, as did the church. Wayward or divergent individuals were persuaded and corrected before coercion.

Popular conceptions of Puritans as hardened authoritarians are exaggerated, but if persuasion and arbitration failed, people who did not conform to community norms were punished or removed. Massachusetts banished Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and other religious dissenters like the Quakers.

Although by many measures colonization in New England succeeded, its Puritan leaders failed in their
own mission to create a utopian community that would inspire their fellows back in England. They tended to focus their disappointment on the younger generation. “But alas!” Increase Mather lamented, “That so many of the younger Generation have so early corrupted their [the founders’] doings!” The Jeremiad, a sermon lamenting the fallen state of New England due to its straying from its early virtuous path, became a staple of late seventeenth-century Puritan literature.

Yet the Jeremiads could not stop the effects of the prosperity that the early Puritans achieved. The population spread and grew more diverse as New England prospered. Many, if not most, New Englanders retained strong ties to their Calvinist roots into the eighteenth century, but the Puritans (who became Congregationalists) struggled against a rising tide of religious pluralism. On December 25, 1727, Judge Samuel Sewell noted in his diary that a new Anglican minister “keeps the day in his new Church at Braintrey: people flock thither.” Previously forbidden holidays like Christmas were not only celebrated in Church. Puritan divine Cotton Mather discovered on the Christmas of 1711, “a number of young people of both sexes, belonging, many of them, to my flock, had…a Frolick, a reveling Feast, and a Ball, which discovers their Corruption.”

Despite the lamentations of the Mathers and other Puritan leaders of their failure, they left an enduring mark on New England culture and society that endured long after the region’s residents ceased to be called “Puritan.”

VII. Conclusion

The fledgling settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts paled in importance when compared to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Valued more as marginal investments and social safety valves where the poor could be released, these colonies nonetheless created a foothold for Britain on a vast North American continent. And although the seventeenth century would be fraught for Britain—religious, social, and political upheavals would behead one king and force another to flee his throne—settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia were nonetheless tied together by the emerging Atlantic economy. While commodities such as tobacco and sugar fueled new markets in Europe, the economy grew increasingly dependent upon slave labor. Enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic would further complicate the collision of cultures in the Americas. The creation and maintenance of a slave system would spark new understandings of human difference and new modes of social control. The economic exchanges of the new Atlantic economy would not only generate great wealth and exploitation, they would also lead to new cultural systems and new identities for the inhabitants of at least four continents.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
I. Introduction

Whether they came as servants, slaves, free farmers, religious refugees, or powerful planters, the men and women of the American colonies created new worlds. Native Americans saw fledgling settlements turned into unstoppable beachheads of vast new populations that increasingly monopolized resources and remade the land into something else entirely. Meanwhile, as colonial societies developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fluid labor arrangements and racial categories solidified into the race-based, chattel slavery that increasingly defined the economy of the British Empire. The North American mainland, ignored by many imperial officials, were nevertheless deeply tied into these larger Atlantic networks. A new and increasingly complex Atlantic World connected the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Events across the ocean continued to influence the lives of American colonists. Civil war, religious conflict, and nation building transformed seventeenth-century Britain and remade societies on both sides of the ocean. At the same time, colonial settlements grew and matured, developing into powerful societies capable of warring against Native Americans and subduing internal upheaval. Patterns and systems established during the colonial era would continue to shape American society for centuries. And none, perhaps, would be as brutal and destructive as the institution of slavery.
II. Slavery and the Making of Race

After his arrival as a missionary in Charles Town, Carolina in 1706, Reverend Francis Le Jau quickly grew disillusioned by the horrors of American slavery. He met enslaved Africans ravaged by the Middle Passage, Indians traveling south to enslave enemy villages, and colonists terrified of invasions from French Louisiana and Spanish Florida. Slavery and death surrounded him.

Le Jau’s strongest complaints were reserved for his own countrymen, the English. English traders encouraged wars with Indians in order to purchase and enslave captives, and planters justified the use of an enslaved workforce by claiming white servants were “good for nothing at all.” Carolina slave owners echoed English colonizers’ negative views of the Irish in their refusal to concede “that Negroes and Indians are otherwise than Beasts.” Although the minister thought otherwise and baptized and educated a substantial number of slaves, he was unable to overcome masters’ fear Christian baptism would lead to slave emancipation.

The 1660s marked a turning point for black men and women in English colonies like Barbados in the West Indies and Virginia in North America. New laws gave legal sanction to the enslavement of people of African descent for life. The permanent deprivation of freedom and the separate legal status of enslaved Africans facilitated the maintenance of strict racial barriers. Skin color became more than superficial difference; it became the marker of a transcendent, all-encompassing division between two distinct peoples, two races, white and black.

All seventeenth-century racial thought did not point directly toward modern classifications of racial hierarchy. Captain Thomas Phillips, master of a slave ship in 1694, did not justify his work with any such creed: “I can’t think there is any intrinsic value in one color more than another, nor that white is better than black, only we think it so because we are so.” For Phillips, the profitability of slavery was the only justification he needed.

Wars offered the most common means for colonists to acquire Native American slaves. Seventeenth-century European legal thought held that enlisting prisoners of war was not only legal, but more merciful than killing the captives outright. After the Pequot War (1636-1637), Massachusetts Bay colonists sold hundreds of North American Indians into slavery in the West Indies. A few years later, Dutch colonists in New Netherland (New York and New Jersey) enslaved Algonquian Indians during both Governor Kieft’s War (1641-1645) and the two Eposus Wars (1659-1664). The Dutch sent these war captives to English-settled Bermuda as well as Curaçao, a Dutch plantation-colony in the southern Caribbean. An even larger number of Indian slaves
were captured during King Phillip’s War (1675-1676), a pan-Indian uprising against the encroachments of the New England colonies. Hundreds of Indians were bound and shipped into slavery. The New England colonists also tried to send Indian slaves to Barbados, but the Barbados Assembly refused to import the New England Indians for fear they would encourage rebellion.

In the eighteenth century, wars in Florida, South Carolina, and the Mississippi Valley produced even more Indian slaves. Some wars emerged from contests between Indians and colonists for land, while others were manufactured as pretenses for acquiring captives. Some were not wars at all, but merely illegal raids performed by slave traders. Historians estimate that between 24,000 and 51,000 Native Americans were forced into slavery throughout the southern colonies between 1670 and 1715. While some of the enslaved Indians remained in the region, many were exported through Charlestown, South Carolina, to other ports in the British Atlantic—most likely to Barbados, Jamaica, and Bermuda. Many of the English colonists who wished to claim land in frontier territories were threatened by the violence inherent in the Indian slave trade. By the eighteenth century, colonial governments often discouraged the practice, although it never ceased entirely as long as slavery was, in general, a legal institution.

Native American slaves died quickly, mostly from disease, but others were murdered or died from starvation. The demands of growing plantation economies required a more reliable labor force, and the transatlantic slave trade provided such a workforce. European slavers transported millions of Africans across the ocean in a terrifying journey known as the Middle Passage. Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, Olaudah Equiano recalled the fearsomeness of the crew, the filth and gloom of the hold, the inadequate provisions allotted for the captives, and the desperation that drove some slaves to suicide. (Equiano claimed to have been born in Igboland in modern-day Nigeria, but he may have been born in colonial South Carolina, where he collected memories of the Middle Passage from African-born slaves.) In the same time period, Alexander Falconbridge, a slave ship surgeon, described the sufferings of slaves from shipboard infections and close quarters in the hold. Dysentery, known as “the bloody flux,” left captives lying in pools of excrement. Chained in small spaces in the hold, slaves could lose so much skin and flesh from chafing against metal and timber that their bones protruded. Other sources detailed rapes, whippings, and diseases like smallpox and conjunctivitis aboard slave ships.

“Middle” had various meanings in the Atlantic slave trade. For the captains and crews of slave ships, the Middle Passage was one leg in the maritime trade in sugar and other semi-finished American goods, manufactured European commodities, and African slaves. For the enslaved Africans, the Middle
Passage was the middle leg of three distinct journeys from Africa to the Americas. First was an overland journey in Africa to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles. Second—and middle—was an oceanic trip lasting from one to six months in a slaver. Third was acculturation (known as “seasoning”) and transportation to the American mine, plantation, or other location where new slaves were forced to labor.

The impact of the Middle Passage on the cultures of the Americas remains evident today. Many foods associated with Africans, such as cassava, were originally imported to West Africa as part of the slave trade, which were then adopted by African cooks before being brought to the Americas, where they are still consumed. West African rhythms and melodies live in new forms today in music as varied as religious spirituals and synthesized drumbeats. African influences appear in the basket making and language of the Gullah people on the Carolina Coastal Islands.

Recent estimates count between 11 and 12 million Africans forced across the Atlantic between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, with about 2 million deaths at sea as well as an additional several million dying in the trade’s overland African leg or during seasoning. Conditions in all three legs of the slave trade were horrible, but the first abolitionists focused especially on the abuses of the Middle Passage.

Southern European trading empires like the Catalans and Aragonese were brought into contact with a Levantine commerce in sugar and slaves in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Europeans made the first steps toward an Atlantic slave trade in the 1440s, when Portuguese sailors landed in West Africa in search of gold, spices, and allies against the Muslims who dominated Mediterranean trade. Beginning in the 1440s, ship captains carried African slaves to Portugal. These Africans were valued primarily as domestic servants, as peasants provided the primary agricultural labor force in Western Europe. European expansion into the Americas introduced both settlers and European authorities to a new situation—an abundance of land and a scarcity of labor. Portuguese, Dutch, and English ships became the conduits for Africans forced to America. The western coast of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, and the west-central coast were the sources of African captives. Wars of expansion and raiding parties produced captives who could be sold in coastal factories. African slave traders bartered for European finished goods such as beads, cloth, rum, firearms, and metal wares.

Slavers often landed in the British West Indies, where slaves were seasoned in places like Barbados. Charleston, South Carolina, became the leading entry point for the slave trade on the mainland. The founding of Charleston (“Charles Town” until the 1780s) in 1670 was viewed as a serious
threat by the Spanish in neighboring Florida, who began construction of Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine as a response. In 1693 the Spanish king issued the Decree of Sanctuary, which granted freedom to slaves fleeing the English colonies if they converted to Catholicism and swore an oath of loyalty to Spain. The presence of Africans who bore arms and served in the Spanish militia testifies to the different conceptions of race among the English and Spanish in America.

Sugar and tobacco became enormously popular items of consumption in Europe in the early colonial period, but rice, indigo, and rum were also profitable plantation exports. Brazil was the most common destination for slaves—more than four million slaves ended up in the Portuguese colony. English slave traders, however, brought approximately two million slaves to the British West Indies. By the middle of the eighteenth century English slavers had become the most active carriers of Africans across the Atlantic, and huge profits flowed into Britain as a result of the Atlantic slave system.

About 450,000 Africans landed in British North America, a relatively small portion of the 11 to 12 million victims of the trade. As a proportion of the enslaved population, there were more females in North America than in other colonial slave populations. Enslaved African women also bore more children than their counterparts in the Caribbean or South America, facilitating the natural reproduction of slaves on the North American continent. A 1662 Virginia law stated that an enslaved woman’s children inherited the “condition” of their mother; other colonies soon passed similar statutes. This economic strategy on the part of planters created a legal system in which all children born to slave women would be slaves for life, whether the father was white or black, enslaved or free.

Most fundamentally, the emergence of modern notions of race was closely related to the colonization of the Americas and the slave trade. African slave traders lacked a firm category of race that might have led them to think that they were selling their own people, in much the same way that Native Americans did not view other Indian groups as part of the same
“race.” Similarly, most English citizens felt no racial identification with the Irish or the even the Welsh. The modern idea of race as an inherited physical difference (most often skin color) that is used to support systems of oppression was a specific product of the early modern Atlantic world.

In the early years of slavery, especially in the South, the distinction between indentured servants and slaves was initially unclear. In 1643, however, a law was passed in Virginia that made African women “tithable.” This, in effect, associated African women’s work with difficult agricultural labor. There was no similar tax levied on white women; the law was an attempt to distinguish white from African women. The English ideal was to have enough hired hands and servants working on a farm so that wives and daughters did not have to partake in manual labor. Instead, white women were expected to labor in dairy sheds, small gardens, and kitchens. Of course, due to the labor shortage in early America, white women did participate in field labor. But this idealized gendered division of labor contributed to the English conceiving of themselves as better than other groups who did not divide labor in this fashion, including the West Africans arriving in slave ships to the colonies. For many white colonists, the association of a gendered division of labor with Englishness provided a further justification for the enslavement and subordination of Africans.

Ideas about the rule of the household were informed by legal and customary understandings of marriage and the home in England. A man was expected to hold “paternal dominion” over his household, which included his wife, children, servants, and slaves. In contrast, slaves were not legally masters of a household, and were therefore subject to the authority of the white master. Slave marriages were not recognized in colonial law. Some enslaved men and women married “abroad”; that is, they married individuals who were not owned by the same master and did not live on the same plantation. These husbands and wives had to travel miles at a time, typically only once a week on Sundays, to visit their spouses. Legal or religious authority did not protect these marriages, and masters could refuse to let their slaves visit a spouse, or even sell a slave to a new master hundreds of miles away from their spouse and children. In addition to distance that might have separated family members, the work of keeping children fed and clothed often fell to enslaved women. They performed essential work during the hours that they were not expected to work for the master. They produced clothing and food for their husbands and children and often provided religious and educational instruction. Within the patriarchal and exploitative colonial environment, enslaved men and women struggled to establish families and communities.
III. Turmoil in Britain

Religious conflict plagued sixteenth-century England. While Spain plundered the New World and built an empire, in England Catholic and Protestant monarchs vied for supremacy and attacked their opponents as heretics. Queen Elizabeth cemented Protestantism as the official religion of the realm, but questions endured as to what kind of Protestantism would hold sway. Many radical Protestants (often called “Puritans” by their critics) looked to the New World as an opportunity to create a beacon of Calvinist Christianity, while others continued the struggle in England. By the 1640s, political and economic conflicts between Parliament and the Crown merged with long-simmering religious tensions. The result was a bloody civil war. Colonists reacted in a variety of ways as England waged war on itself, but all were affected by these decades of turmoil.

In 1642, no permanent British North American colony was more than 35 years old. The Crown and various proprietors controlled most of the colonies, but settlers from Barbados to Maine enjoyed a great deal of independence. This was especially true in Massachusetts Bay, where Puritan settlers governed themselves according to the colony’s 1629 charter. Trade in tobacco and naval stores tied the colonies to England economically, as did religion and political culture, but in general the English state left the colonies to their own devices.

The English Revolution of the 1640s forced settlers in America to reconsider their place within the empire. Older colonies like Virginia and proprietary colonies like Maryland sympathized with the Crown. Newer colonies like Massachusetts Bay, populated by religious dissenters taking part in the Great Migration of the 1630s, tended to favor Parliament. Yet during the war the colonies remained neutral, fearing that support for either side could involve them in war. Even Massachusetts Bay, which nurtured ties to radical Protestants in Parliament, remained neutral.

Charles’s execution in 1649 challenged American neutrality. Six colonies, including Virginia and Barbados, declared allegiance to the dead monarch’s son, Charles II. Parliament responded with an Act in 1650 that leveled an economic embargo on the rebelling colonies, forcing them to accept Parliament’s authority. Parliament argued in the Act that America had been “planted at the Cost,
and settled” by the English nation, and that it, as the embodiment of that commonwealth, possessed ultimate jurisdiction over the colonies. It followed up the embargo with the Navigation Act of 1651, which compelled merchants in every colony to ship goods directly to England in English ships. Parliament sought to bind the colonies more closely to England, and deny other European nations, especially the Dutch, from interfering with its American possessions.

Though many in England welcomed the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, popular suspicions of the House of Stuart’s Catholic and French sympathies lingered. Charles II’s suppression of the religious and press freedoms that flourished during the civil war years demonstrated the Crown’s desire to re-impose order and royal rule. But it was the openly Catholic and pro-French policies of his successor, James II, that led to the overthrow of the monarchy once again in 1688. In that year a group of bishops and Parliamentarians offered the English throne to the Dutch Prince William of Holland and his English bride, Mary, the daughter of James II. This relatively peaceful coup was called the Glorious Revolution.

In the decades before the Glorious Revolution English colonists experienced religious and political conflict that reflected transformations in Europe as well as distinctly colonial conditions. In the 1670s and early 1680s King Charles II tightened English control over North America and the West Indies through the creation of new colonies, the imposition of new Navigation Acts, and the establishment of a new executive Council called the Lords of Trade and Plantations. As imperial officials attempted to curb colonists’ autonomy, threats from Native Americans and New France on the continent led many colonists to believe Indians and Catholics sought to destroy English America. In New England an uprising beginning in 1675 led by the Wampanoag leader Metacom, or King Philip as the English called him, seemed to confirm these fears. Indian conflicts helped trigger the revolt against royal authorities known as Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia the following year.

James II worked to place the colonies on firmer administrative and defensive footing by creating the Dominion of New England in 1686. The Dominion consolidated the New England colonies, New York, and New Jersey into one administrative unit to counter French Canada, but colonists strongly resented the loss of their individual provinces. The Dominion’s governor, Sir Edmund Andros, did little to assuage fears of arbitrary power when he forced colonists into military service for a campaign against Maine Indians in early 1687. Impressment into military service was a longstanding grievance among English commoners that was transplanted to the colonies.

In England, James’s push for religious toleration of Catholics and Dissenters brought him into conflict with Parliament and the Anglican establishment in
England. After the 1688 invasion by the Protestant William of Orange, James fled to France. When colonists learned imperial officials in Boston and New York City attempted to keep news of the Glorious Revolution secret, simmering hostilities toward provincial leaders burst into the open. In Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland colonists overthrew colonial governments as local social antagonisms fused with popular animosity towards imperial rule. Colonists in America quickly declared allegiance to the new monarchs. They did so in part to maintain order in their respective colonies. As one Virginia official explained, if there was “no King in England, there was no Government here.” A declaration of allegiance was therefore a means toward stability.

More importantly, colonists declared for William and Mary because they believed their ascension marked the rejection of absolutism and confirmed the centrality of Protestantism and liberty in English life. Settlers joined in the revolution by overthrowing the Dominion government, restoring the provinces to their previous status, and forcing out the Catholic-dominated Maryland government. They launched several assaults against French Canada as part of “King William’s War,” and rejoiced in Parliament’s 1689 passage of a Bill of Rights, which curtailed the power of the monarchy and cemented Protestantism in England. For English colonists, it was indeed a “glorious” revolution as it united them in a Protestant empire that stood counter to Catholic tyranny, absolutism, and French power.

IV. New Colonies

Despite the turmoil in Britain, colonial settlement grew considerably throughout the seventeenth century, and several new settlements joined the two original colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts.

In 1632, Charles I set a tract of about 12 million acres of land at the northern tip of the Chesapeake Bay aside for a second colony in America. Named for the new monarch’s queen, Maryland was granted to Charles’s friend and political ally, Cecilius Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore. Calvert hoped to gain additional wealth from the colony, as well as to create a haven for fellow Catholics. In England, many of that faith found themselves harassed by the Protestant
majority and more than a few considered migrating to America. Charles I, a Catholic sympathizer, was in favor of Lord Baltimore’s plan to create a colony that would demonstrate that Catholics and Protestants could live together peacefully.

In late 1633, both Protestant and Catholic settlers left England for the Chesapeake, arriving in Maryland in March 1634. Men of middling means found greater opportunities in Maryland, which prospered as a tobacco colony without the growing pains suffered by Virginia.

Unfortunately, Lord Baltimore’s hopes of a diverse Christian colony were thwarted. Most colonists were Protestants relocating from Virginia. Many of these Protestants were radical Quakers and Puritans who were frustrated with Virginia’s efforts to force adherence to the Anglican, or Church of England, faith. In 1650, Puritans revolted, setting up a new government that prohibited both Catholicism and Anglicanism. Governor William Stone attempted to put down the revolt in 1655, but would not be successful until 1658. Two years after the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), the Calverts lost control of Maryland and the province became a royal colony.

Religion was a motivating factor in the creation of several other colonies as well, including the New England colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island. The settlements that would eventually comprise Connecticut grew out of settlements in Saybrook and New Haven. Thomas Hooker and his congregation left Massachusetts for Connecticut because the area around Boston was becoming increasingly crowded. The Connecticut River Valley was large enough for more cattle and agriculture. In June 1636, Hooker led one hundred people and a variety of livestock in settling an area they called Newtown (later Hartford).

New Haven Colony had a more directly religious origin, as the founders attempted a new experiment in Puritanism. In 1638, John Davenport, Theophilus Eaton, and other supporters of the Puritan faith settled in the Quinnipiac (New Haven) area of the Connecticut River Valley. In 1643, New Haven Colony was officially organized, with Eaton named governor. In the early 1660s, three men who had signed the death warrant for Charles I were concealed in New Haven. This did not win the colony any favors, and it became increasingly poorer and weaker.
In 1665, New Haven was absorbed into Connecticut, but its singular religious tradition endured with the creation of Yale College.

Religious radicals similarly founded Rhode Island. After his exile from Massachusetts, Roger Williams created a settlement called Providence in 1636. He negotiated for the land with the local Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi. Williams and his fellow settlers agreed on an egalitarian constitution and established religious and political freedom in the colony. The following year, another Massachusetts exile, Anne Hutchinson, and her followers settled near Providence. Others soon arrived, and the colony was granted a charter by Parliament in 1644. Persistently independent and with republican sympathies, the settlers refused a governor and instead elected a president and council. These separate plantations passed laws abolishing witchcraft trials, imprisonment for debt and, in 1652, chattel slavery. Because of the colony’s policy of toleration, it became a haven for Quakers, Jews, and other persecuted religious groups. In 1663, Charles II granted the colony a royal charter establishing the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the English neglected the area between Virginia and New England despite obvious environmental advantages. The climate was healthier than the Chesapeake and more temperate than New England. The mid-Atlantic had three highly navigable rivers: the Susquehanna, Delaware, and Hudson. The Swedes and Dutch established their own colonies in the region: New Sweden in the Delaware Valley and New Netherland in the Hudson Valley.

Compared to other Dutch colonies around the globe, the settlements on the Hudson River were relatively minor. The Dutch West India Company realized that in order to secure its fur trade in the area, it needed to establish a greater presence in New Netherland. Toward this end, the company formed New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island in 1625.

Although the Dutch extended religious tolerance to those who settled in New Netherland, the population remained small. This left the colony vulnerable to English attack during the 1650s and 1660s, resulting in the hand-over of New Netherland to England in 1664. The new colony of New York was named for the proprietor, James, the Duke of York, brother to Charles I and funder of the expedition against the Dutch in 1664. New York was briefly reconquered by the Netherlands in 1667, and class and ethnic conflicts in New York City contributed to the rebellion against English authorities during the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. Colonists of Dutch ancestry resisted assimilation into English culture well into the eighteenth century, prompting New York Anglicans to note that the colony was “rather like a conquered foreign province.”
After the acquisition of New Netherland, Charles I and the Duke of York wished to strengthen English control over the Atlantic seaboard. In theory, this was to better tax the colonies; in practice, the awarding of the new proprietary colonies of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas was a payoff of debts and political favors.

In 1664, the Duke of York granted the area between the Hudson and Delaware rivers to two English noblemen. These lands were split into two distinct colonies, East Jersey and West Jersey. One of West Jersey’s proprietors included William Penn. The ambitious Penn wanted his own, larger colony, the lands for which would be granted by both Charles II and the Duke of York. Pennsylvania consisted of about 45,000 square miles west of the Delaware River and the former New Sweden. Penn was a member of the Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers, and he intended his colony to be a “colony of Heaven for the children of Light.” Like New England’s aspirations to be a City Upon a Hill, Pennsylvania was to be an example of godliness. But Penn’s dream was to create not a colony of unity, but rather a colony of harmony. He noted in 1685 that “the people are a collection of diverse nations in Europe, as French, Dutch, Germans, Swedes, Danes, Finns, Scotch, and English; and of the last equal to all the rest.” Because Quakers in Pennsylvania extended to others in America the same rights they had demanded for themselves in England, the colony attracted a diverse collection of migrants. Slavery was particularly troublesome for some pacifist Quakers of Pennsylvania on the grounds that it required violence. In 1688, members of the Society of Friends in Germantown, outside of Philadelphia, signed a petition protesting the institution of slavery among fellow Quakers.

The Pennsylvania soil did not lend itself to the slave-based agriculture of the Chesapeake, but other colonies would depend heavily on slavery from their very foundations. The creation of the colony of Carolina, later divided into North and South Carolina and Georgia, was part of Charles I’s scheme to strengthen the English hold on the eastern seaboard and pay off political and cash debts. The Lords Proprietor of Carolina—eight very powerful favorites of the king—used the model of the colonization of Barbados to settle the area. In 1670, three ships of colonists from Barbados arrived at the mouth of the Ashley River, where they founded Charles Town. This defiance of Spanish claims to the area signified England’s growing confidence as a colonial power.

To attract colonists, the Lords Proprietor offered alluring incentives: religious tolerance, political representation by assembly, exemption from quitrents, and large land grants. These incentives worked and Carolina grew quickly, attracting not only middling farmers and artisans but also wealthy planters. Colonists who could pay their own way to Carolina were granted 150 acres per family member. The Lords
Proprietor allowed for slaves to be counted as members of the family. This encouraged the creation of large rice and indigo plantations along the coast of Carolina, which were more stable commodities than the deerskin and Indian slave trades. Because of the size of Carolina, the authority of the Lords Proprietor was especially weak in the northern reaches on the Albemarle Sound. This region had been settled by Virginians in the 1650s and was increasingly resistant to Carolina authority. As a result, the Lords Proprietor founded the separate province of North Carolina in 1691.

V. Riots, Rebellion & Revolt

The seventeenth century saw the establishment and solidification of the British North American colonies, but this process did not occur peacefully. Explosions of violence rocked nearly all of the English settlements on the continent.

In May 1637, an armed contingent of English Puritans from Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Connecticut colonies trekked into Indian country in territory claimed by New England. Referring to themselves as the “Sword of the Lord,” this military force intended to attack “that insolent and barbarous Nation, called the Pequots.” In the resulting violence, Puritans put the Mystic community to the torch, beginning with the north and south ends of the town. As Pequot men, women, and children tried to escape the blaze, other soldiers waited with swords and guns. One commander estimated that of the “four hundred souls in this Fort...not above five of them escaped out of our hands,” although another counted near “six or seven hundred” dead. In a span of less than two months, the English Puritans boasted that the Pequot “were drove out of their country, and slain by the sword, to the number of fifteen hundred.”

The foundations of the war lay within the rivalry between the Pequot, the Narragansett, and the Mohegan, who battled for control of the fur and wampum trades in the northeast. This rivalry eventually forced the English and Dutch to choose sides. The war remained a conflict of Native interests and initiative, especially as the Mohegan hedged their bets on the English and reaped the rewards that came with displacing the Pequot.

Victory over the Pequots not only provided security and stability for the English colonies, but also propelled the Mohegan to new heights of political and economic influence as the primary power in New England. Ironically, history seemingly repeated itself later in the century as the Mohegan, desperate for a remedy to their diminishing strength, joined the Wampanoag war against the Puritans. This produced a more violent conflict in 1675 known as King Philip’s War, bringing a decisive end to Indian power in New England.

In the winter of 1675, the body of John Sassamon, a Christian, Harvard-educated Wampanoag, was found
under the ice of a nearby pond. A fellow Christian Indian informed English authorities that three warriors under the local sachem named Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, had killed Sassamon, who had previously accused Metacom of planning an offensive against the English. The three alleged killers appeared before the Plymouth court in June 1675, were found guilty of murder, and executed. Several weeks later, a group of Wampanoags killed nine English colonists in the town of Swansea.

Metacom—like most other New England sachems—had entered into covenants of “submission” to various colonies, viewing the arrangements as relationships of protection and reciprocity rather than subjugation. Indians and English lived, traded, worshiped, and arbitrated disputes in close proximity before 1675; but the execution of three of Metacom’s men at the hands of Plymouth Colony epitomized what many Indians viewed as the growing inequality of that relationship. The Wampanoags who attacked Swansea may have sought to restore balance, or to retaliate for the recent executions. Neither they nor anyone else sought to engulf all of New England in war, but that is precisely what happened. Authorities in Plymouth sprung into action, enlisting help from the neighboring colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Metacom and his followers eluded colonial forces in the summer of 1675, striking more Plymouth towns as they moved northwest. Some groups joined his forces, while others remained neutral or supported the English. The war badly divided some Indian communities. Metacom himself had little control over events, as panic and violence spread throughout New England in the autumn of 1675. English mistrust of neutral Indians, sometimes accompanied by demands they surrender their weapons, pushed many into open war. By the end of 1675, most of the Indians of present-day western and central Massachusetts had entered the war, laying waste to nearby English towns like Deerfield, Hadley, and Brookfield. Hapless colonial forces, spurning the military assistance of Indian allies such as the Mohegans, proved unable to locate more mobile native communities or intercept Indian attacks.

The English compounded their problems by attacking the powerful and neutral Narragansetts of Rhode Island in December 1675. In an action called the Great Swamp Fight, 1,000 Englishmen put the main Narragansett village to the torch, gunning down as many as 1,000 Narragansett men, women, and children as they fled the maelstrom. The surviving Narragansetts joined the Indians already fighting the English. Between February and April 1676, Native forces devastated a succession of English towns closer and closer to Boston.

In the spring of 1676, the tide turned. The New England colonies took the advice of men like Benjamin Church, who urged the greater use of Native allies to find and fight the mobile warriors.
Unable to plant crops and forced to live off the land, Indians’ will to continue the struggle waned as companies of English and Native allies pursued them. Growing numbers of fighters fled the region, switched sides, or surrendered in the spring and summer. The English sold many of the latter group into slavery. Colonial forces finally caught up with Metacom in August 1676, and the sachem was slain by a Christian Indian fighting with the English.

The war permanently altered the political and demographic landscape of New England. Between 800 and 1,000 English and at least 3,000 Indians perished in the 14-month conflict. Thousands of other Indians fled the region or were sold into slavery. In 1670, Native Americans comprised roughly 25 percent of New England’s population; a decade later, they made up perhaps 10 percent. The war’s brutality also encouraged a growing hatred of all Indians among many New England colonists. Though the fighting ceased in 1676, the bitter legacy of King Philip’s War lived on.

Native American communities in Virginia had already been decimated by wars in 1622 and 1644. But in the same year that New Englanders crushed Metacom’s forces, a new clash arose in Virginia. This conflict, known as Bacon’s Rebellion, grew out of tensions between Native Americans and English settlers as well as tensions between wealthy English landowners and the poor settlers who continually pushed west into Indian territory.

Bacon’s Rebellion began, appropriately enough, with an argument over a pig. In the summer of 1675, a group of Doeg Indians visited Thomas Mathew on his plantation in northern Virginia to collect a debt that he owed them. When Mathew refused to pay, they took some of his pigs to settle the debt. This “theft” sparked a series of raids and counter-raids. The Susquehannock Indians were caught in the crossfire when the militia mistook them for Doegs, leaving fourteen dead. A similar pattern of escalating violence then repeated: the Susquehannocks retaliated by killing colonists in Virginia and Maryland, and the English marshaled their forces and laid siege to the Susquehannocks. The conflict became uglier after the militia executed a delegation of Susquehannock ambassadors under a flag of truce. A few parties of warriors intent on revenge launched raids along the frontier and killed dozens of English colonists.

The sudden and unpredictable violence of the Susquehannock War triggered a political crisis in Virginia. Panicked colonists fled en masse from the vulnerable frontiers, flooding into coastal communities and begging the government for help. But the cautious governor, Sir William Berkeley, did not send an army after the Susquehannocks. He worried that a full-scale war would inevitably drag other Indians into the conflict, turning allies into deadly enemies. Berkeley therefore insisted on a defensive strategy centered around a string of new fortifications to protect the frontier and strict
instructions not to antagonize friendly Indians. It was a sound military policy but a public relations disaster. Terrified colonists condemned Berkeley. Building contracts for the forts went to Berkeley’s wealthy friends, who conveniently decided that their own plantations were the most strategically vital. Colonists denounced the government as a corrupt band of oligarchs more interested in lining their pockets than protecting the people.

By the spring of 1676, a small group of frontier colonists took matters into their own hands. Naming the charismatic young Nathaniel Bacon as their leader, these self-styled “volunteers” proclaimed that they took up arms in defense of their homes and families. They took pains to assure Berkeley that they intended no disloyalty, but Berkeley feared a coup and branded the volunteers as traitors. Berkeley finally mobilized an army—not to pursue Susquehannocks, but to crush the colonists’ rebellion. His drastic response catapulted a small band of anti-Indian vigilantes into full-fledged rebels whose survival necessitated bringing down the colonial government.

Bacon and the rebels stalked the Susquehannock as well as friendly Indians like the Pamunkeys and the Occaneechis. The rebels became convinced that there was a massive Indian conspiracy to destroy the English and portrayed themselves to frightened Virginians as heroes. Berkeley’s stubborn persistence in defending friendly Indians and destroying the Indian-fighting rebels led Bacon to accuse the governor of conspiring with a “powerful cabal” of elite planters and with “the protected and darling Indians” to slaughter his English enemies.

In the early summer of 1676, Bacon’s neighbors elected him their burgess and sent him to Jamestown to confront Berkeley. Though the House of Burgesses enacted pro-rebel reforms like prohibiting the sale of arms to Indians and restoring suffrage rights to landless freemen, Bacon’s supporters remained unsatisfied. Berkeley soon had Bacon arrested and forced the rebel leader into the humiliating position of publicly begging forgiveness for his treason. Bacon swallowed this indignity, but turned the tables by gathering an army of followers and surrounding the State House, demanding that Berkeley name him the General of Virginia and bless his universal war against Indians. Instead, the 70-year old governor stepped onto the field in front of the crowd of angry men, unafraid, and called Bacon a traitor to his face. Then he tore open his shirt and dared Bacon to shoot him in the heart, if he was so intent on overthrowing his government. “Here!” he shouted before the crowd, “Shoot me, before God, it is a fair mark. Shoot!” When Bacon hesitated, Berkeley drew his sword and challenged the young man to a duel, knowing that Bacon could neither back down from a challenge without looking like a coward nor kill him without making himself into a villain. Instead, Bacon resorted to bluster and blasphemy. Threatening to slaughter the entire Assembly if necessary, he cursed, “God damn my blood, I came for a commission, and a
commission I will have before I go.” Berkeley stood defiant, but the cowed burgesses finally prevailed upon him to grant Bacon’s request. Virginia had its general, and Bacon had his war.

After this dramatic showdown in Jamestown, Bacon’s Rebellion quickly spiraled out of control. Berkeley slowly rebuilt his loyalist army, forcing Bacon to divert his attention to the coasts and away from the Indians. But most rebels were more interested in defending their homes and families than in fighting other Englishmen, and deserted Bacon in droves at every rumor of Indian activity. In many places, the “rebellion” was less an organized military campaign than a collection of local grievances and personal rivalries. Both rebels and loyalists smelled the opportunities for plunder, seizing their rivals’ estates and confiscating their property.

For a small but vocal minority of rebels, however, the rebellion became an ideological revolution: Sarah Drummond, wife of rebel leader William Drummond, advocated independence from England and the formation of a Virginian Republic, declaring “I fear the power of England no more than a broken straw.” Others struggled for a different kind of independence: white servants and black slaves fought side by side in both armies after promises of freedom for military service. Everyone accused everyone else of treason, rebels and loyalists switched sides depending on which side was winning, and the whole Chesapeake disintegrated into a confused melee of secret plots and grandiose crusades, sordid vendettas and desperate gambits, with Indians and English alike struggling for supremacy and survival. One Virginian summed up the rebellion as “our time of anarchy.”

The rebels steadily lost ground and ultimately suffered a crushing defeat. Bacon died of typhus in the autumn of 1676, and his successors surrendered to Berkeley in January 1677. Berkeley summarily tried and executed the rebel leadership in a succession of kangaroo courts-martial. Before long, however, the royal fleet arrived, bearing over 1,000 red-coated troops and a royal commission of investigation charged with restoring order to the colony. The commissioners replaced the governor and dispatched Berkeley to London, where he died in disgrace.

But the conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion was uncertain, and the maintenance of order remained precarious for years afterward. The garrison of royal troops discouraged both incursion by hostile Indians and insurrection by discontented colonists, allowing the king to continue profiting from tobacco revenues. The end of armed resistance did not mean a resolution to the underlying tensions destabilizing colonial society. Indians inside Virginia remained an embattled minority and Indians outside Virginia remained a terrifying threat. Elite planters continued to grow rich by exploiting their indentured servants and marginalizing small farmers. The vast majority of Virginians continued to resent their exploitation with a simmering fury. Virginia legislators did
recognize the extent of popular hostility towards colonial rule, however, and improved the social and political conditions of poor whites in the years after the rebellion. During the same period, the increasing availability of enslaved workers through the Atlantic slave trade contributed to planters’ large-scale adoption of slave labor in the Chesapeake.

Just a few years after Bacon’s Rebellion, the Spanish experienced their own tumult in the area of contemporary New Mexico. The Spanish had been maintaining control partly by suppressing Native American beliefs. Friars aggressively enforced Catholic practice, burning native idols and masks and other sacred objects and banishing traditional spiritual practices. In 1680 the Pueblo religious leader Popé, who had been arrested and whipped for “sorcery” five years earlier, led various Puebloan groups in rebellion. Several thousand Pueblo warriors razed the Spanish countryside and besieged Santa Fe. They killed 400, including 21 Franciscan priests, and allowed 2,000 other Spaniards and Christian Pueblos to flee. It was perhaps the greatest act of Indian resistance in North American history.

In New Mexico, the Pueblos eradicated all traces of Spanish rule. They destroyed churches and threw themselves into rivers to wash away their Christian baptisms. “The God of the Christians is dead,” Popé proclaimed, and the Pueblo resumed traditional spiritual practices. The Spanish were exiled for twelve years. They returned in 1692, weakened, to reconquer New Mexico.

The late seventeenth century was a time of great violence and turmoil. Bacon’s Rebellion turned white Virginians against one another, King Philip’s War shattered Indian resistance in New England, and the Pueblo Revolt struck a major blow to Spanish power. It would take several more decades before similar patterns erupted in Carolina and Pennsylvania, but the constant advance of European settlements provoked conflict in these areas as well.

In 1715, The Yamasees, Carolina’s closest allies and most lucrative trading partners, turned against the colony and nearly destroyed it entirely. Writing from Carolina to London, the settler George Rodd believed the Yamasees wanted nothing less than “the whole continent and to kill us or chase us all out.” Yamasees would eventually advance within miles of Charles Town.
The Yamasee War’s first victims were traders. The governor had dispatched two of the colony’s most prominent men to visit and pacify a Yamasee council following rumors of native unrest. Yamasees quickly proved the fears well founded by killing the emissaries and every English trader they could corral.

Yamasees, like many other Indians, had come to depend on English courts as much as the flintlock rifles and ammunition traders offered them for slaves and animal skins. Feuds between English agents in Indian country had crippled the court of trade and shut down all diplomacy, provoking the violent Yamasee reprisal. Most Indian villages in the southeast sent at least a few warriors to join what quickly became a pan-Indian cause against the colony.

Yet Charles Town ultimately survived the onslaught by preserving one crucial alliance with the Cherokees. By 1717, the conflict had largely dried up, and the only remaining menace was roaming Yamasee bands operating from Spanish Florida. Most Indian villages returned to terms with Carolina and resumed trading. The lucrative trade in Indian slaves, however, which had consumed 50,000 souls in five decades, largely dwindled after the war. The danger was too high for traders, and the colonies discovered even greater profits by importing Africans to work new rice plantations. Herein lies the birth of the “Old South,” that expanse of plantations that created untold wealth and misery. Indians retained the strongest militaries in the region, but they never again threatened the survival of English colonies.

If a colony existed where peace with Indians might continue, it would be Pennsylvania. At the colony’s founding William Penn created a Quaker religious imperative for the peaceful treatment of Indians. While Penn never doubted that the English would appropriate Native lands, he demanded his colonists obtain Indian territories through purchase rather than violence. Though Pennsylvanians maintained relatively peaceful relations with Native Americans, increased immigration and booming land speculation increased the demand for land. Coercive and fraudulent methods of negotiation became increasingly prominent. The Walking Purchase of 1737 was emblematic of both colonists’ desire for cheap land and the changing relationship between Pennsylvanians and their Native neighbors.

Through treaty negotiation in 1737, native Delaware leaders agreed to sell Pennsylvania all of the land that a man could walk in a day and a half, a common measurement utilized by Delawares in evaluating distances. John and Thomas Penn, joined by the land speculator and longtime friend of the Penns James Logan, hired a team of skilled runners to complete the “walk” on a prepared trail. The runners traveled from Wrightstown to present-day Jim Thorpe and proprietary officials then drew the new boundary line perpendicular to the runners’ route, extending northeast to the Delaware River. The colonial government thus measured out a tract much larger than Delawares had originally intended to sell, roughly 1,200 square miles. As a result, Delaware-
proprietary relations suffered. Many Delawares left the lands in question and migrated westward to join Shawnees and other Delawares already living in the Ohio Valley. There, they established diplomatic and trade relationships with the French. Memories of the suspect purchase endured into the 1750s and became a chief point of contention between the Pennsylvanian government and Delawares during the upcoming Seven Years War.

VI. Conclusion

The seventeenth century saw the creation and maturation of Britain’s North American colonies. Colonists endured a century of struggle against unforgiving climates, hostile natives, and imperial intrigue. They did so largely through ruthless expressions of power. Colonists conquered Indians, attacked European rivals, and joined a highly lucrative transatlantic economy rooted in slavery. After surviving a century of desperation and war, British North American colonists fashioned increasingly complex societies with unique religious cultures, economic ties, and political traditions. These societies would come to shape not only North America, but soon the entirety of the Atlantic World.

Content provided by The American Yawp
I. Introduction

Eighteenth century American culture moved in competing directions. Commercial, military and cultural ties between Great Britain and the North American colonies tightened while a new distinctly American culture began to form and bind together colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia. Immigrants from other European nations meanwhile combined with Native Americans and enslaved Africans to create an increasingly diverse colonial population. All–men and women, European, Native American, and African–led distinct lives and wrought new distinct societies. While life in the thirteen colonies was shaped in part by English practices and participation in the larger Atlantic World, emerging cultural patterns increasingly transformed North America into something wholly different.

II. Consumption and Trade in the British Atlantic

Britain’s central role in transatlantic trade greatly enriched the mother country, but it also created high standards of living for many North American colonists. This two–way relationship reinforced the colonial American feeling of commonality with British culture. It was not until trade relations, disturbed by political changes and the demands of warfare, became strained in the 1760s that colonists began to question these ties.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, improvements in manufacturing, transportation, and the availability of credit increased the opportunity
for colonists to purchase consumer goods. Instead of making their own tools, clothes, and utensils colonists increasingly purchased luxury items made by specialized artisans and manufacturers. As the incomes of Americans rose and the prices of these commodities fell, these items shifted from luxuries to common goods. The average person’s ability to spend money on consumer goods became a sign of their respectability. Historians have called this process the “consumer revolution.”

Britain relied on the colonies as source of raw materials, such as lumber and tobacco. Americans engaged with new forms of trade and financing that increased their ability to buy British-made goods. But the ways in which colonists paid for these goods varied sharply from those in Britain. When settlers first arrived in North America, they typically carried very little hard or metallic British money with them. Discovering no precious metals (and lacking the crown’s authority to mint coins), colonists relied on barter and non-traditional forms of exchange, including everything from nails to the wampum used by Native American groups in the Northeast. To deal with the lack of currency, many colonies resorted to “commodity money,” which varied from place to place. In Virginia, for example, the colonial legislature stipulated a rate of exchange for tobacco, standardizing it as a form of money in the colony. Commodities could be cumbersome and difficult to transport, so a system of notes developed, allowing individuals to deposit a certain amount of tobacco in a warehouse and receive a note bearing the value of the deposit that could be traded as money. In 1690, colonial Massachusetts became the first colony, as well as the first place in the Western world, to issue paper bills to be used as money. These notes, called bills of credit, were issued for finite periods of time on the colony’s credit and varied in denomination from quite small to large enough to cover major transactions.

While these notes provided colonists with a much-needed medium for exchange, it was not without its problems. Currency that worked in Virginia might be worthless in Pennsylvania. Colonists and officials back in Britain debated whether or not it was right or desirable to use mere paper, as opposed to gold or silver, as a medium of exchange. Paper money tended to lose value quicker than coins and was often counterfeited. These problems, as well as British merchants’ reluctance to accept depreciated paper
notes, caused the Board of Trade to restrict the uses of paper money in the Currency Acts of 1751 and 1763. Paper money was not the only medium of exchange, however. Colonists also made use of metal coins. Barter and the extension of credit – which could take the form of bills of exchange, akin to modern-day personal checks – remained important forces throughout the colonial period. Trade between colonies was greatly hampered by the lack of standardized money.

To encourage consumers, businesses on both sides of the Atlantic advertised the variety of goods, their quality, and the ease of obtaining credit. The consistent availability of credit allowed families of modest means to buy consumer items previously available only to elites. Cheap consumption allowed middle class Americans to match many of the trends in clothing, food, and household décor that traditionally marked the wealthiest, aristocratic classes. Provincial Americans, often seen by their London peers as less cultivated or “backwater,” could think of themselves as lords and ladies of their own communities through their ability to purchase and display British-made goods. Visiting the home of a successful businessman in Boston, John Adams described “the Furniture, which alone cost a thousand Pounds sterling. A seat it is for a noble Man, a Prince. The Turkey Carpets, the painted Hangings, the Marble Table, the rich Beds with crimson Damask Curtains and Counterpins, the beautiful Chimney Clock, the Spacious Garden, are the most magnificent of any thing I have seen.” But many Americans worried about the consequences of rising consumerism. A writer for The Boston Evening Post remarked on this new practice purchasing status: “For ‘tis well known how Credit is a mighty inducement with many People to purchase this and the other Thing which they may well enough do without.” Americans became more likely to find themselves in debt, whether to their local shopkeeper or a prominent London merchant, creating new feelings of dependence.

Of course, the thirteen continental colonies were not the only British colonies in the Western hemisphere. In fact, they were considerably less important to the Crown than the sugar producing islands of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, and Dominica. Though separated from the continent by the Caribbean Sea, these British colonies were inextricably connected to the continental colonies through commerce. Caribbean plantations dedicated nearly all of their land to the wildly profitable crop of sugar cane, so North American colonies sold surplus food and raw materials to these wealthy island colonies. Lumber was in high demand, especially in Barbados where planters nearly deforested the island to make room for sugar plantations. To compensate for a lack of lumber, Barbadian colonists ordered house frames from New England. These prefabricated frames were sent via ships where planters transported them to their plantations. Caribbean colonists also relied on the continental colonies for livestock, purchasing...
cattle and horses. The most lucrative of all these exchanges was the slave trade, which involved the human trafficking of black peoples into the mainland colonies.

Connections between the Caribbean and North America benefited both sides. Those living on the continent relied on the Caribbean colonists to satisfy their craving for sugar and other goods like mahogany. British colonists in the Caribbean began cultivating sugar in the 1640s, and sugar took the Atlantic World by storm. In fact, by 1680, sugar exports from the tiny island of Barbados valued more than the total exports of all the continental colonies. Jamaica, acquired by the Crown in 1655, surpassed Barbados in sugar production toward the end of the seventeenth century. North American colonists like Britons around the world, craved sugar to sweeten their tea and food. Colonial elites also sought to decorate their parlors and dining rooms with the silky, polished surfaces of rare mahogany as opposed to local wood. While the bulk of this in-demand material went to Britain and Europe, New England merchants imported the wood from the Caribbean where it was then transformed into exquisite furniture for those who could afford it.

These systems of trade all existed with the purpose of enriching Great Britain. To ensure that profits ended up in Britain, Parliament issued taxes on trade called Navigation Acts. Through these taxes, consumption became intertwined with politics. Prior to 1763, Britain found that enforcing the regulatory laws they passed was difficult and often cost them more than the duty revenue they would bring in. As a result, colonists found it relatively easy to trade on their own terms, whether that was with foreign nations, pirates, or smugglers. Customs officials were easily bribed and it was not uncommon to see Dutch, French, or West Indies ships laden with prohibited goods in American ports. When smugglers were caught, their American peers often acquitted them. British officials estimated that nearly £700,000 of illicit goods was brought into the American colonies annually. Pirates, or what colonists considered privateers, also helped to perpetuate the illegal trading activities by providing a buffer between merchants and foreign ships. Beginning with the Sugar Act in 1764, and continuing with the Stamp Act and the Townshend Duties, Parliament levied taxes on sugar, paper, lead, glass, and tea, all products that contributed to colonists’
sense of gentility. In response, patriots organized non-importation agreements. They reverted to their domestic products, making items such as homespun cloth a political statement. A writer in *The Essex Gazette* in 1769 proclaimed, “I presume there never was a Time when, or a Place where, the Spinning Wheel could more influence the Affairs of Men, than at present.”

The consumer revolution fueled the growth of colonial cities. Cities in colonial America were crossroads for the movement of people and goods. One in twenty colonists lived in cities by 1775. Some cities grew organically over time, while others were planned from the start. New York and Boston’s seventeenth-century street plans reflected the haphazard arrangement of medieval cities in Europe. In other cities like Philadelphia and Charleston, civic leaders laid out urban plans according to calculated systems of regular blocks and squares. Planners in Annapolis and Williamsburg also imposed regularity and order over their city streets through the placement of government, civic, and educational buildings.

By 1775, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston were the five largest cities in British North America. Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston had populations of approximately 40,000; 25,000; 16,000; and 12,000 people, respectively. Urban society was highly stratified. At the base of the social ladder were the laboring classes, which included both enslaved and free persons ranging from apprentices to master craftsmen. Next came the middling sort: shopkeepers, artisans, and skilled mariners. Above them stood the merchant elites who tended to be actively involved in the city’s social and political affairs, as well as in the buying, selling, and trading of goods. Enslaved men and women had a visible presence in both northern and southern cities.

While the bulk of the enslaved population lived in rural areas performing agricultural labor, in port cities, slaves often worked as domestic servants and in skilled trades: distilleries, shipyards, lumberyards, and ropewalks. Between 1725 and 1775, slavery became increasingly significant in the northern colonies as urban residents sought greater participation in the maritime economy. Massachusetts was the first slave-holding colony in New England. New York traced its connections to slavery and the slave trade back to the Dutch settlers of New Netherland in the seventeenth century. Philadelphia also became an active site of the Atlantic slave trade, and slaves accounted for nearly 8% of the city’s population in 1770. In southern cities, including Charleston, urban slavery played an important role in the market economy. Slaves, both rural and urban, made up the majority of the laboring population on the eve of the American Revolution.

### III. Slavery, Anti-Slavery and Atlantic Exchange

Slavery was a transatlantic institution. However, it developed distinct characteristics in British North
America. By 1750, slavery was legal in every North American English colony, but local economic imperatives, demographic trends, and cultural practices all contributed to distinct colonial variants of slavery.

Virginia, the oldest of the English mainland colonies, imported its first slaves in 1619. Virginia planters built larger and larger estates and guaranteed that these estates would remain intact through the use of primogeniture (where a family’s estate would descend to the eldest male heir) and the entail (a legal procedure that prevented the breakup and sale of estates). This distribution of property, which kept wealth and property consolidated, guaranteed that the great planters would dominate social and economic life in the Chesapeake. This system also fostered an economy dominated by tobacco. By 1750 there were approximately 100,000 African slaves in Virginia, at least 40% of the colony’s total population. The majority of these slaves worked on large estates under the gang system of labor, working from dawn to dusk in groups with close supervision by a white overseer or enslaved “driver” who could use physical force to compel labor.

Virginians used the law to protect the interests of slaveholders. In 1705 the House of Burgesses passed its first comprehensive slave code. Earlier laws had already guaranteed that the children of enslaved women would be born slaves, conversion to Christianity would not lead to freedom, and owners could not free their slaves unless they transported them out of the colony. Slave owners could not be convicted of murder for killing a slave; conversely, any black Virginian who struck a white colonist would be severely whipped. Virginia planters used the law to maximize the profitability of their slaves and closely regulate every aspect of their daily lives.

In South Carolina and Georgia, slavery was also central to colonial life but specific local conditions created a very different system of slavery. Georgia was founded by the philanthropist James Oglethorpe, who originally banned slavery from the colony. But by 1750 slavery was legal throughout the region. South Carolina had been a slave colony from its founding and, by 1750, was the only mainland colony with a majority enslaved African population. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, co-authored by the philosopher John Locke in 1669, explicitly legalized slavery from the very beginning. Many early settlers in Carolina were slaveholders from British Caribbean sugar islands, and they brought their brutal slave codes with them. Defiant slaves could legally be beaten, branded, mutilated, even castrated. In 1740 a new law stated that killing a rebellious slave was not a crime and even the murder of a slave was treated as a minor misdemeanor. South Carolina also banned the freeing of slaves unless the freed slave left the colony.

Despite this brutal regime, a number of factors combined to give South Carolina slaves more independence in their daily lives. Rice, the staple crop underpinning the early Carolina economy, was widely
cultivated in West Africa, and planters commonly requested that merchants sell them slaves skilled in the complex process of rice cultivation. Slaves from Senegambia were particularly prized. The expertise of these slaves contributed to one of the most lucrative economies in the colonies. The swampy conditions of rice plantations, however, fostered dangerous diseases. Malaria and other tropical diseases spread, and caused many owners to live away from their plantations. These elites, who commonly owned a number of plantations, typically lived in Charleston townhouses to avoid the diseases of the rice fields. West Africans, however, were far more likely to have a level of immunity to malaria (due to a genetic trait that also contributes to higher levels of sickle cell anemia), reinforcing planters’ racial belief that Africans were particularly suited to labor in tropical environments.

With plantation owners often far from home, Carolina slaves had less direct oversight than those in the Chesapeake. Furthermore, many Carolina rice plantations used the task system to organize slave labor. Under this system, slaves were given a number of specific tasks to complete in a day, but once those tasks were complete slaves often had time to grow some crops of their own on garden plots allotted by plantation owners. These slaves participated in a thriving underground market that allowed them a degree of economic autonomy. Carolina slaves also had an unparalleled degree of cultural autonomy. This autonomy coupled with the frequent arrival of new Africans enabled a slave culture that retained many African practices. Syncretic languages like Gullah and Geechee contained many borrowed African terms, and traditional African basket weaving (often combined with Native American techniques) survives in the region to this day.

This unique Low Country slave culture contributed to the Stono Rebellion in September 1739. On a Sunday morning while planters attended church, a group of about 80 slaves set out for Spanish Florida under a banner that read “Liberty!,” burning plantations and killing at least 20 white settlers as they marched. They were headed for Fort Mose, a free black settlement on the Georgia-Florida border, emboldened by the Spanish Empire’s offer of freedom to any English slaves. Though the Stono Rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful – the local militia defeated the rebels in battle, captured and executed many of the slaves, and sold others to the sugar plantations of the West Indies – it was a violent reminder to South Carolina planters that their slaves would fight for freedom.

Slavery was also an important institution in the mid-Atlantic colonies. While New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania never developed plantation economies, slaves were often employed on larger farms growing cereal grains. Enslaved Africans worked alongside European tenant farmers on New York’s Hudson Valley “patroonships,” huge tracts of land granted to a few early Dutch families. As previously mentioned, slaves were also a common sight in Philadelphia,
New York City, and other ports where they worked in the maritime trades and domestic service. New York City’s economy was so reliant on slavery that over 40% of its population was enslaved by 1700, while 15-20% of Pennsylvania’s colonial population was enslaved by 1750. In New York, the high density of slaves and a particularly diverse European population increased the threat of rebellion. A 1712 slave rebellion in New York City resulted in the deaths of 9 white colonists. In retribution, 21 slaves were executed and 6 others committed suicide before they could be burned alive. In 1741, another planned rebellion by African slaves, free blacks, and poor whites was uncovered, unleashing a witch-hunt that only stopped after 32 slaves and free blacks and 5 poor whites were executed. Another 70 slaves were deported, likely to the sugar cane fields of the West Indies.

Increasingly uneasy about the growth of slavery in the region, Quakers were the first group to turn against slavery. Quaker beliefs in radical non-violence and the fundamental equality of all human souls made slavery hard to justify. Most commentators argued that slavery originated in war, where captives were enslaved rather than executed. To pacifist Quakers, then, the very foundation of slavery was illegitimate. Furthermore Quaker belief in the equality of souls challenged the racial basis of slavery. By 1758, Quakers in Pennsylvania disowned members who engaged in the slave trade, and by 1772 slave-owning Quakers could be expelled from their meetings.

These local activities in Pennsylvania had broad implications as the decision to ban slavery and slave trading was debated in Quaker meetings throughout the English-speaking world. The free black population in Philadelphia and other northern cities also continually agitated against slavery.

Slavery as a system of labor never took off in Massachusetts, Connecticut, or New Hampshire, though it was legal throughout the region. The absence of cash crops like tobacco or rice minimized the economic use of slavery. In Massachusetts, only about 2% of the population was enslaved as late as the 1760s. The few slaves in the colony were concentrated in Boston along with a sizeable free black community that made up about 10% of the city’s population. While slavery itself never really took root in New England, the slave trade was a central element of the region’s economy. Every major port in the region participated to some extent in the transatlantic trade – Newport, Rhode Island alone had at least 150 ships active in the trade by 1740 – and New England also provided foodstuffs and manufactured goods to West Indian plantations.

**IV. Pursuing Political, Religious and Individual Freedom**

Consumption, trade, and slavery drew the colonies closer to Great Britain, but politics and government split them further apart. Democracy in Europe more closely resembled oligarchies rather than republics, with only elite members of society eligible to serve in
elected positions. Most European states did not hold regular elections, with Britain and the Dutch Republic being the two major exceptions. However, even in these countries, only a tiny portion of males could vote. In the North American colonies, by contrast, white male suffrage was far more widespread. In addition to having greater popular involvement, colonial government also had more power in a variety of areas. Assemblies and legislatures regulated businesses, imposed new taxes, cared for the poor in their communities, built roads and bridges, and made most decisions concerning education. Colonial Americans sued often, which in turn led to more power for local judges and more prestige in jury service. Thus, lawyers became extremely important in American society, and in turn, played a greater role in American politics.

American society was less tightly controlled than European society. This led to the rise of various interest groups, each at odds with the other. These various interest groups arose based on commonalities in various areas. Some commonalities arose over class-based distinctions, while others were due to ethnic or religious ties. One of the major differences between modern politics and colonial political culture was the lack of distinct, stable, political parties. The most common disagreement in colonial politics was between the elected assemblies and the royal governor. Generally, the various colonial legislatures were divided into factions who either supported or opposed the current governor’s political ideology.

Political structures in the colonies fell under one of three main categories: provincial, proprietary, and charter. The provincial colonies included New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The proprietary colonies included Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland. The charter colonies included Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. The provincial colonies were the most tightly controlled by the crown. The British king appointed all of the provincial governors. These crown governors could veto any decision made by the legislative assemblies in the provincial colonies. The proprietary colonies had a similar structure, with one important difference: governors were appointed by a lord proprietor, an individual who had purchased or received the rights to the colony from the crown. This generally led to proprietary colonies having more freedoms and
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liberties than other colonies in colonial America. The charter colonies had the most complex system of government, formed by political corporations or interest groups who drew up a charter that clearly delineated powers between executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. As opposed to having governors appointed, the charter colonies elected their own governors from among the property-owning men in the colony.

After the governor, colonial government was broken down into two main divisions: the council and the assembly. The council was essentially the governor’s cabinet, often composed of prominent individuals within the colony, such as the head of the militia, or the attorney-general of the colony. The governor appointed these men, often subject to approval from Parliament. The assembly was composed of elected, property-owning men whose official goal was to ensure that colonial law conformed to English law. The colonial assemblies approved new taxes and the colonial budgets. However, many of these assemblies saw it as their duty to check the power of the governor and ensure that he did not take too much power within colonial government. Unlike Parliament, most of the men who were elected to an assembly came from local districts, with their constituency able to hold their elected officials accountable to promises made.

An elected assembly was an offshoot of the idea of civic duty, the notion that men had a responsibility to support and uphold the government through voting, paying taxes, and service in the militia. Americans firmly accepted the idea of a social contract, the idea that government was put in place by the people. Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke pioneered this idea, and there is evidence to suggest that these writers influenced the colonists. While in practice elites controlled colonial politics, in theory many colonists believed in the notion of equality before the law and opposed special treatment for any members of colonial society.

Whether or not African Americans, Native Americans, and women would also be included in this notion of equality before the law was far less clear. In particular, women’s role in the family became more complicated. Many historian’s view this period as a significant time of transition. Importantly, Anglo-American families during the colonial period differed from their European counterparts. Widely available land and plentiful natural resources allowed for greater fertility and thus encouraged more people to marry earlier in life. Yet while young marriages and large families were common throughout the colonial period, family sizes started to shrink by the end of the 1700s as wives asserted more control over their own bodies.

New ideas governing romantic love helped to change the nature of husband-wife relationships. Deriving from the sentimental literary movement, many Americans began to view marriage as an emotionally fulfilling relationship rather than a strictly economic
partnership. Referring to one another as “Beloved of my Soul” or “My More than Friend,” newspaper editor John Fenno and his wife Mary Curtis Fenno illustrate what some historians refer to as the “companionate ideal.” While away from his wife, John felt a “vacuum in my existence,” a sentiment returned by Mary’s “Doting Heart.” Indeed, after independence, wives began to not only provide emotional sustenance to their husbands, but to inculcate the principles of republican citizenship as “republican wives.”

Marriage opened up new emotional realms for some but remained oppressive for others. For the millions of Americans bound in chattel slavery, marriage remained an informal arrangement rather than a codified legal relationship. For white women, the legal practice of coverture meant that women lost all of their political and economic rights to their husband. Divorce rates rose throughout the 1790s, as did less formal cases of abandonment. Newspapers published advertisements by deserted men and women denouncing their partners publically. Known as “elopement notices,” they catalogued the various sorts of misbehavior of deviant spouses, such as wives’ “indecent manner,” a way of implying sexual impropriety. As violence and inequality continued in many American marriages, wives in return highlighted their husbands’ “drunken fits” and violent rages. One woman noted how her partner “presented his gun at my breast… and swore he would kill me.”

That couples would turn to newspapers as a source of expression illustrates the importance of what historians call print culture. Print culture includes the wide range of factors contributing to how books and other printed objects are made, including the relationship between the author and the publisher, the technical constraints of the printer, and the tastes of readers. In colonial America, regional differences in daily life impacted the way colonists made and used printed matter. However, all the colonies dealt with threats of censorship and control from imperial supervision. In particular, political content stirred the most controversy.

From the establishment of Virginia in 1607, printing was regarded either as unnecessary within such harsh living conditions or it was actively discouraged. The governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley, summed up the attitude of the ruling class in 1671: “I thank God there are no free schools nor printing…for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy…and printing has divulged them.” Ironically, the circulation of hand-written tracts contributed to Berkeley’s undoing. The popularity of Nathaniel Bacon’s uprising was in part due to widely circulated tracts questioning Berkeley’s competence. Berkeley’s harsh repression of Bacon’s Rebellion was equally well documented. It was only after Berkeley’s death in 1677 that the idea of printing in the Southern colonies was revived. William Nuthead, an experienced English printer, set up shop in 1682, although the next governor of the colony, Thomas Culpeper
forbade Nuthead from completing a single project. It wasn’t until William Parks set up his printing shop in Annapolis in 1726 that the Chesapeake had a stable local trade in printing and books.

Print culture was very different in New England. Puritans had an established respect for print from the very beginning. Unfortunately, New England’s authors were content to publish in London, making the foundations of Stephen Daye’s first print shop in 1639 very shaky. Typically printers made their money from printing sheets, not books to be bound. The case was similar in Massachusetts, where the first printed work was a *Freeman’s Oath*. The first book was not issued until 1640, the *Bay Psalm Book*, of which 11 known copies survive. His contemporaries recognized the significance of Daye’s printing, and he was awarded 140 acres of land. The next large project, the first bible to be printed in America, was undertaken by Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson, published 1660. That same year, the Eliot Bible, named for its translator John Eliot, was printed in the Natick dialect of the local Algonquin tribes.

Massachusetts remained the center of colonial printing for a hundred years, until Philadelphia overtook Boston in 1770. Philadelphia’s rise as the printing capital of the colonies began with two important features: first, the arrival of Benjamin Franklin in 1723, equal parts scholar and businessman, and second, waves of German immigrants created a demand for German-language press. From the mid 1730s, Christopher Sauer, and later his son, wholly met this demand with German-language newspapers and religious texts. Nevertheless Franklin was a one-man culture of print, revolutionizing the book trade in addition to creating public learning initiatives such as the Library Company and the Academy of Philadelphia. His *Autobiography* offers one of the most detailed glimpses of life in a print shop available. Given the flurry of newspapers, pamphlets, and books for sale in Franklin’s Philadelphia, it is little wonder that in 1775 Thomas Paine had his *Common Sense* printed in hundreds of thousands of copies with the Philadelphia printer Robert Bell.

Debates on religious expression continued throughout the 18th century. In 1711 a group of New England ministers published a collection of sermons entitled *Early Piety*. The most famous of them, Increase Mather, wrote the preface. In it he asked the question “What did our forefathers come into this...
wilderness for?” His answer was simple: to test their faith against the challenges of America and win. The grandchildren of the first settlers had been born into the comfort of well-established colonies and worried that their faith had suffered. This sense of inferiority sent colonists looking for a reinvigorated religious experience. The result came to be known as the Great Awakening.

Only with hindsight does the Great Awakening look like a unified movement. The first revivals began unexpectedly in the Congregational churches of New England in the 1730’s and then spread through the 1740’s and 1750’s to Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists in the other Thirteen Colonies. Different places at different times experienced revivals of different intensities. Yet in all of these communities colonists discussed the same need to strip their lives of worldly concerns and return to a more pious lifestyle. The form it took was something of a contradiction. Preachers became key figures in encouraging individuals to find a personal relationship with God.

The first signs of religious revival appeared in Jonathan Edwards’ congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards was a theologian who shared the faith of the early Puritan settlers. In particular he believed in the idea called predestination that God had decided in advance who was damned and who was saved. However, he worried that his congregation had stopped searching their souls and were merely doing good works to prove they were saved. With a missionary zeal, Edwards preached against worldly sins and called for his congregation to look inwards for signs of God’s saving grace. His most famous sermon was called “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Suddenly in the winter of 1734 these sermons sent his congregation into violent convulsions. The spasms first appeared amongst known sinners in the community. Over the next 6 months the physical symptoms spread to half of the 600 person-congregation. Edwards shared the work of his revival in a widely circulated pamphlet.

Over the next decade itinerant preachers were more successful in spreading the spirit of revival around America. These preachers had the same spiritual goal as Edwards, but brought with them a new religious
experience. They abandoned traditional sermons in favor of outside meetings where they could whip up the congregation into an emotional frenzy that might reveal evidence of saving grace. Many religious leaders were suspicious of the enthusiasm and message of these revivals, but colonists flocked to the spectacle.

The most famous itinerant preacher was George Whitefield. According to Whitefield the only type of faith that pleased God was heartfelt. The established churches only encouraged apathy. “The Christian World is dead asleep,” Whitefield explained, “Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it.” He would be that voice. Whitefield was a former actor with a dramatic style of preaching and a simple message. Thundering against sin and for Jesus Christ, Whitefield invited everyone to be born again. It worked. Through the 1730’s he traveled from New York to South Carolina converting ordinary men, women and children. “I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence,” wrote a socialite in Philadelphia, “broken only by an occasional half suppressed sob.” A farmer recorded the powerful impact this rhetoric could have: “And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God’s blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.” The number of people trying to hear Whitefield’s message were so large that he preached in the meadows at the edges of cities. Contemporaries regularly testified to crowds of thousands and in one case over 20,000 in Philadelphia. Whitefield and the other itinerant preachers had achieved what Edwards could not, making the revivals popular.

Ultimately the religious revivals became a victim of the preachers’ success. As itinerant preachers became more experimental they alienated as many people as they converted. In 1742 one preacher from Connecticut, James Davenport, persuaded his congregation that he had special knowledge from God. To be saved they had to dance naked in circles at night whilst screaming and laughing. Or, they could burn the books he disapproved of. Either way, this type of extremism demonstrated to many that revivalism had gone wrong. A divide appeared by the 1740s and 1750s between “New Lights,” who still believed in a revived faith, and “Old Lights,” who thought it was deluded nonsense.

By the 1760s, the religious revivals had petered out; however, they left a profound impact on America. Leaders like Edwards and Whitefield encouraged individuals to question the world around them. This idea reformed religion in America and created a language of individualism that promised to change everything else. If you challenged the church, what other authority figures might you question? The Great Awakening provided a language of individualism, re-inforced in print culture, which reappeared in the call for independence. While pre-revolutionary America had profoundly oligarchical qualities, the groundwork was laid for a more republican society. However,
society did not transform easily overnight. It would take intense, often physical, conflict to change colonial life.

V. Seven Years’ War

Of the 87 years between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the American Revolution (1775), Britain was at war with France and French-allied Native Americans for 37 of them. These were not wars in which European soldiers fought other European soldiers. American militiamen fought for the British against French Catholics and their Indian allies in all of these engagements. Warfare took a physical and spiritual toll on British colonists. British towns located on the border between New England and New France experienced intermittent raiding by French-allied Native Americans. Raiding parties would destroy houses and burn crops, but they would also take captives. They brought these captives to French Quebec, where some were ransomed back to their families in New England and others converted to Catholicism and remained in New France. In this sense, Catholicism threatened to literally capture Protestant lands and souls.

In 1754 a force of British colonists and Native American allies, led by young George Washington, attacked and killed a French diplomat. This incident led to a war, which would become known as the Seven Years’ War or the French and Indian War. In North America, the French achieved victory in the early portion of this war. They attacked and burned multiple British outposts, such as Fort William Henry in 1757. In addition, the French seemed to easily defeat British attacks, such as General Braddock’s attack on Fort Duquesne, and General Abercrombie’s attack on Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) in 1758. These victories were often the result of alliances with Native Americans.

In Europe, the war did not fully begin until 1756, when British-allied Frederick II of Prussia invaded the neutral state of Saxony. As a result of this invasion, a massive coalition of France, Austria, Russia, and Sweden attacked Prussia and the few German states allied with Prussia. The ruler of Austria, Maria Theresa, hoped to conquer the province of Silesia, which had been lost to Prussia in a previous war. In the European war, the British monetarily supported the Prussians, as well as the minor western German states of Hesse-Kassel and Braunschweig-WolfbütTEL.
These subsidy payments enabled the smaller German states to fight France and allowed the excellent Prussian army to fight against the large enemy alliance.

However, as in North America, the early part of the war went against the British. The French defeated Britain’s German allies and forced them to surrender after the Battle of Hastenbeck in 1757. The Austrians defeated the Prussians in the Battle of Kolin, also in 1757. However, Frederick of Prussia defeated the French at the Battle of Rossbach in November of 1757. This battle allowed the British to rejoin the war in Europe. Just a month later, Frederick’s army defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Leuthen, reclaiming the vital province of Silesia. In India and throughout the world’s oceans, the British and their fleet consistently defeated the French. Robert Clive and his Indian allies defeated the French at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. With the sea firmly in their control, the British could send more troops to North America.

These newly arrived soldiers allowed the British to launch new offensives. The large French port and fortress of Louisbourg, in present day Nova Scotia, fell to the British in 1758. In 1759, British General James Wolfe defeated French General Montcalm in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, outside of Quebec City. In Europe, 1759 saw the British defeat the French at the Battle of Minden, and destroy large portions of the French fleet. The British referred to 1759 as the “annus mirabilis” or the year of miracles. These victories brought about the fall of French Canada, and for all intents and purposes, the war in North America ended in 1760 with the British capture of Montreal. The British continued to fight against the Spanish, who entered the war in 1762. In this war, the Spanish successfully defended Nicaragua against British attacks but were unable to prevent the conquest of Cuba and the Philippines.

The Seven Years’ War ended with the peace treaties of Paris in 1762 and Hubertusburg in 1763. The British received much of Canada and North America from the French, while the Prussians retained the important province of Silesia. This gave the British a larger empire than they could control, which contributed to tensions leading to revolution. In particular, it exposed divisions within the newly expanded empire, including language, national affiliation, and religious views. When the British captured Quebec in 1760, a newspaper distributed in the colonies to celebrate the event boasted: “The time will come, when Pope and Friar/Shall both be roasted in the fire/When the proud Antichristian whore/will sink, and never rise more.”

American colonists rejoiced over the defeat of Catholic France and felt secure that the Catholics in Quebec could no longer threaten them. Of course, the American colonies had been a haven for religious minorities since the seventeenth century. Early religious pluralism served as evidence of an “American melting pot” that included Catholic Maryland. But practical toleration of Catholics existed alongside virulent
anti-Catholicism in public and political arenas. It was a powerful and enduring rhetorical tool borne out of warfare and competition between Britain and France.

In part because of constant conflict with Catholic France, Britons on either side of the Atlantic and of a variety of Protestant sects cohered around a pan-Protestant interest. British ministers in England called for a coalition to fight French and Catholic empires that imperiled Protestantism. Missionary organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for Propagation of the Gospel were founded at the turn of the seventeenth century to evangelize Native Americans and limit Jesuits advances in converting them to Catholicism. The previously mentioned Protestant revivals of the so-called Great Awakening crisscrossed the Atlantic and founded a participatory religious movement during the 1730s and 1740s that united British Protestant churches. Preachers and merchants alike urged greater Atlantic trade to knit the Anglophone Protestant Atlantic together through commerce.

VI. Pontiac’s War

Relationships between colonists and Native Americans were complex and often violent. In 1761, Neolin, a prophet, received a vision from his religion’s main deity, known as the Master of Life. The Master of Life told Neolin that the only way to enter Heaven would be to cast off the corrupting influence of Europeans, by expelling the British from Indian country: “This land where ye dwell I have made for you and not for others. Whence comes it that ye permit the Whites upon your lands…Drive them out, make war upon them.” Neolin preached the avoidance of alcohol, a return to traditional rituals, and pan-Indian unity to his disciples, including Pontiac, an Ottawa leader.

Pontiac took Neolin’s words to heart and sparked the beginning of what would become known as Pontiac’s War against British soldiers, traders, and settlers. At its height, the pan-Indian uprising included native peoples from the territory between the Great Lakes, Appalachians, and the Mississippi River. Though Pontiac did not command all of the Indians participating in the war, his actions were influential in its development. Pontiac and 300 Indian warriors sought to take Fort Detroit by surprise in May 1763 but the plan was foiled, resulting in a six-month siege of the British fort. News of the siege quickly spread throughout Indian country and inspired more attacks on British forts and settlers. In May, Native Americans captured Forts Sandusky, Saint Joseph, and Miami. In June, a coalition of Ottawas and Ojibwes captured Fort Michilimackinac by staging a game of stickball (lacrosse) outside the fort. They chased the ball into the fort, gathered arms that had been smuggled in by a group of Native American women, and killed almost half of the fort’s British soldiers.
Though these Indians were indeed responding to Neolin’s religious message, there were many other practical reasons for waging war on the British. After the Seven Years War, Britain gained control of formerly French territory as a result of the Treaty of Paris. Whereas the French had maintained a peaceful and relatively equal relationship with their Indian allies through trade, the British hoped to profit from and impose “order.” For example, the French often engaged in the Indian practice of diplomatic gift giving. However, the British General Jeffrey Amherst discouraged this practice and regulated the trade or sale of firearms and ammunition to Indians. Most Native Americans, including Pontiac, saw this not as frugal imperial policy but preparation for war.

Pontiac’s War lasted until 1766. Native American warriors attacked British forts and frontier settlements, killing as many as 400 soldiers and 2000 settlers. Disease and a shortage of supplies ultimately undermined the Indian war effort, and in July 1766 Pontiac met with British official and diplomat William Johnson at Fort Ontario and settled for peace. Though the western Indians did not win Pontiac’s War, they succeeded in fundamentally altering the British government’s Indian policy. The war made British officials recognize that peace in the West would require royal protection of Indian lands and heavy-handed regulation of Anglo-American trade activity in Indian country. During the war, the British Crown issued the Royal Proclamation Line of 1763, which marked the Appalachian Mountains as the boundary between Indian country and the British colonies.

The effects of Pontiac’s War were substantial and widespread. The war proved that coercion was not an effective strategy for imperial control, though the British government would continue to employ this strategy to consolidate their power in North America, most notably through the various Acts imposed on their colonies. Additionally, the prohibition of Anglo-American settlement in Indian country, especially the Ohio River Valley, sparked discontent. The French immigrant Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur articulated this discontent most clearly in his 1782 Letters from an American Farmer when he asked, “What then is the American, this new man?” In other words, why did colonists start thinking of themselves as Americans, not Britons? Crèvecoeur suggested that America was a melting pot of self-
reliant individual landholders, fiercely independent in pursuit of their own interests, and free from the burdens of European class systems. It was an answer many wanted to hear and fit with self-conceptions of the new nation, albeit one that imagined itself as white, male, and generally Protestant. The Seven Years’ War pushed the thirteen American colonies closer together politically and culturally than ever before. In 1754, Benjamin Franklin suggested a plan of union to coordinate colonial defenses on a continental scale. Tens of thousands of colonials fought during the war. At the French surrender in 1760, 11,000 British soldiers joined 6,500 militia members drawn from every colony north of Pennsylvania. At home, many heard or read sermons that portrayed the war as a struggle between civilizations with liberty-loving Britons arrayed against tyrannical Frenchmen and savage Indians. American colonists rejoiced in their collective victory as a millennial moment of newfound peace and prosperity. After nearly seven decades of warfare they looked to the newly acquired lands west of the Appalachian Mountains as their reward.

The Seven Years War was tremendously expensive and precipitated imperial reforms on taxation, commerce, and politics. Britain spent over £140 million, an astronomical figure for the day, and the expenses kept on coming as new territory required new security obligations. Britain wanted to recoup some of its expenses and looked to the colonies to share the costs of their own security. To do this, Parliament started legislating over all the colonies in a way rarely done before. As a result, the colonies began seeing themselves as a collective group, rather than just distinct entities. Different taxation schemes implemented across the colonies between 1763 and 1774 placed duties on items like tea, paper, molasses, and stamps for almost every kind of document. Consumption and trade, an important bond between Britain and the colonies, was being threatened. To enforce these unpopular measures, Britain implemented increasingly restrictive policies that eroded civil liberties like protection from unlawful searches and jury trials. The rise of an antislavery movement made many colonists worry that slavery, following increasing imperial involvement in trade and commerce, would soon be attacked. The moratorium on new settlements in the west after Pontiac’s War was yet another disappointment.

VII. Conclusion

By 1763, Americans had never been more united. They fought and they celebrated together. But they also recognized that they were not considered full British citizens, that they were considered something else. Americans across the colonies viewed imperial reforms as threats to the British liberties they saw as their birthright. The Stamp Act Congress of 1765 brought colonial leaders together in an unprecedented show of cooperation against taxes imposed by Parliament and popular boycotts of British goods created a common narrative of sacrifice, resistance, and shared political identity. A revolution loomed.

Content provided by The American Yawp
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>New World saw the arrival of Christopher Columbus, which ushered in European colonization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1534</td>
<td>English Reformation started when Henry VII breaks with Rome.</td>
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<td>1587</td>
<td>English established Roanoke colony.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Virginia Company established Jamestown settlement of the Virginia colony.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>Tobacco planted in Virginia by John Rolfe.</td>
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<td>1617</td>
<td>Commercial tobacco first shipped to England. King James I warns against its use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Powhatan died; Opechancanough became chief of Algonquians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>Africans first arrived in Virginia, &amp; House of Burgesses first met.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>Plymouth colony founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>Opechancanough led uprising against colonists in Virginia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>Virginia became a royal colony.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1626</td>
<td>Dutch purchased Manhattan and established New Amsterdam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>John Winthrop, with royal charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company, led the Puritan settlement of Massachusetts Bay colony.</td>
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<td>1634</td>
<td>Catholic settlers arrived in Maryland colony, held by Lord Baltimore.</td>
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<td>1636</td>
<td>Rhode Island and Connecticut colonies were established.</td>
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<td>1636 - 1637</td>
<td>Pequot War.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td>Anne Hutchinson excommunicated from Massachusetts Bay colony.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1644</td>
<td>Opechancanough led second Indian uprising against Virginia colonists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>English Puritans won civil war in England, executing the King, Charles I.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1660</td>
<td>Monarchy in England was restored with King Charles II; and, Navigation Act creates mercantilism as policy toward New World English colonies. Virginia defined slavery as “inherited and lifelong servitude.”</td>
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<td>1670</td>
<td>Carolina Colony settled at Charles Towne.</td>
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<td>1670 - 1700</td>
<td>Slave labor institutionalized throughout the South.</td>
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<td>1664</td>
<td>English took New Amsterdam and created New York colony; New Jersey colony also created.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1675 - 1676</td>
<td>King Philip’s War</td>
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<td>1676</td>
<td>Bacon’s Rebellion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1681</td>
<td>Pennsylvania colony founded by William Penn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1686</td>
<td>Dominion of New England created.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1688</td>
<td>William III and Mary II lead the Glorious Revolution in England, resulting in King William’s War (France and England fight along New England and New York northern frontier with New France [Canada]).</td>
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<td>1692</td>
<td>Salem witch trials occurred.</td>
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<td>1693</td>
<td>College of William and Mary founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1698</td>
<td>Britain allowed all merchants to engage in the slave trade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Yale College founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1702 - 1713</td>
<td>Queen Anne’s War (England fought France and Spain over colonial possessions in the Caribbean and New France border; part of War of the Spanish Succession in Europe).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1705</td>
<td>Virginia established the Virginia Slave Code.</td>
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<td>1711</td>
<td>North Carolina established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1712</td>
<td>Slave uprising in New York.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1732</td>
<td>Benjamin Franklin started publishing <em>Poor Richard’s Almanac</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1732</td>
<td>Georgia colony founded.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1733</td>
<td>Molasses Act passed.</td>
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<td>1738</td>
<td>George Whitefield toured the colonies for the first time, launching the Great Awakening in America (1740s-1800)</td>
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<td>1739-1748</td>
<td>Stono Rebellion in South Carolina.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>War of Jenkin's Ear (Britain fought against Spain in Caribbean and Georgia; part of the War of the Austrian Succession in Europe).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Parliament passed a colonial naturalization law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1740-1748</td>
<td>King George’s War (Britain and France fought in Nova Scotia and Acadia; also part of the War of the Austrian Succession).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1740s</td>
<td>Most slaves in the colonies were born in the New World.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Georgia opened to slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>1770s</td>
<td>Slave trade to English colonies peaked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1754-1763</td>
<td>French and Indian War (Britain fought against France and Spain in New World and in Europe where war was known as the Seven Years’ War).</td>
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Coming of the Revolution

It is important to remember that the Revolution did not just start over night, nor was everyone in the colonies in favor of a revolution. Americans primarily considered themselves to be subjects of Great Britain. Many were proud to be part of the British Empire and of their roles in fighting for Britain in the colonial wars. It took time for Americans to see themselves as being different and distinct enough from their mother country to warrant the establishment of a new nation. Much personal agony and hardship was involved for many people to come to the decision (by the 1770s) that independence was best. Going into and during the Revolutionary War there were Americans who remained loyal to the crown, and they paid a price for that loyalty.

Britain’s main fault in colonial management was years of what is called salutary neglect (the period during which Great Britain let mercantilism work without strict trade or political regulation of the colonies). Thus, colonies functioned rather independently of the crown in many ways, particularly economically. After the colonial wars, the British treasury was depleted. The leaders in Britain decided that they needed to raise money, and so in the year 1763, British “colonial management” became stricter. Britain regulated the economies and laws of the colonies to make mercantilism work for the revenue-raising benefit of the empire (this included sending troops to the colonies to enforce laws and maintain order). Being a colonizing power, the crown and many in Parliament felt they had the full right to govern the colonies as they saw fit for the benefit of the whole empire. Gradually, Parliament took control over colonial governance and insisted that it was the supreme, legal authority over the colonies.

The colonies, which were accustomed to a good number of years of self-management, now were outraged by the somewhat “sudden” enforcement of laws never before enforced and by the new revenue-raising legislation coming out of London. Being men of the Enlightenment and students of John Locke’s (and others’) writings, colonial leaders argued that in-person, colonial representation (actual representation) was needed in order to validate any legislation Parliament passed regarding the colonies, hence the phrase “No taxation without representation.” Parliament did not agree with this interpretation, arguing in favor of virtual representation.

Again, the road to Revolution was not without bumps. Many opposed to the idea of Revolution, while some wanted it sooner than later. One thing was certain, with the outbreak of fighting in New England and the heavy-handed taxes and tactics of Parliament, most felt the situation was less than ideal. The average person was swayed in favor of a revolution by Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense,” but it took the Second Continental Congress to decide formally in favor of independence for the colonies through the document the “Declaration of Independence.” And, it
was only after Thomas Jefferson removed a passage in the document regarding the ills of slavery that the South agreed to sign it. So, through the years, months, and days preceding the Revolution, controversy, doubt, and disputes dominated the struggle for independence.

The remainder of the readings will cover the key events leading up to the Revolution. Pay particular attention to the names and the details of the various British acts and the colonial reactions to them. As you read, keep the idea of a gradual escalation into hostilities in mind. Additionally, you’ll want to review the concepts learned in relationship to the Enlightenment. Remember that the Lockean concepts of natural rights and social contract were the basis of the philosophical justification for the American Revolution and later the governments established by the founding generation.

Note that sectionalism continued during the Coming of the Revolution Era, though not as obviously as in previous or subsequent eras. Though not 100%, many “loyalists” were in the South, due to long-standing economic and cultural ties to Great Britain. While the many “patriots” were in the North, due to the financial & physical impositions by the British on New England, i.e. in regulating trade and housing of troops. Northern representatives, such as John Adams, to the Continental Congresses favored a revolution, while some Southerners were hesitant, if not resistant. It was not until a southerner, Richard Henry Lee, proposed independence that the South at large was swayed to the cause. Plus, sectionalism was seen in the aforementioned arguments over the wording in the Declaration of Independence. The textbook readings explore sectionalism to various degrees by using phrases like “in the North” or “in the Southern colonies,” etc...; keep an eye out for such language as a way of understanding when sectionalism was at work.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
I. Introduction

In the 1760s, Benjamin Rush, a native of Philadelphia, recounted a visit to Parliament. Upon seeing the King’s throne in the House of Lords, Rush said he “felt as if he walked on sacred ground” with “emotions that I cannot describe.” Throughout the eighteenth century, colonists had developed significant emotional ties with both the British monarchy and the British constitution. British subjects enjoyed a degree of liberty unknown in the unlimited monarchies of France and Spain. The British North American colonists had just helped to win a world war and most, like Rush, had never been more proud to be British. And yet, in a little over a decade, those same colonists would declare their independence and break away from the British Empire. Seen from 1763, nothing would have seemed as improbable as the American Revolution.

The Revolution built institutions and codified the language and ideas that still define Americans’ image of themselves. Moreover, revolutionaries justified their new nation with radical new ideals that changed the course of history and sparked a global “age of revolution.” But the Revolution was as paradoxical as it was unpredictable. A revolution fought in the name of liberty allowed slavery to persist. Resistance to centralized authority tied disparate colonies ever closer together under new governments. The revolution cre-
ated politicians eager to foster republican selflessness and protect the public good but also encouraged individual self-interest and personal gain. The “founding fathers” instigated and fought a revolution to secure independence from Britain, but they did not fight that revolution to create a “democracy.” To successfully rebel against Britain, however, required more than a few dozen “founding fathers.” Common colonists joined the fight, unleashing popular forces that shaped the Revolution itself, often in ways not welcomed by elite leaders. But once unleashed, these popular forces continued to shape the new nation and indeed the rest of American history.

II. The Origins of the American Revolution

The American Revolution had both long-term origins and short-term causes. In this section, we will look broadly at some of the long-term political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments in the eighteenth century that set the context for the crisis of the 1760s and 1770s.

Between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain had largely failed to define the colonies’ relationship to the empire and institute a coherent program of imperial reform. Two factors contributed to these failures. First, Britain was at war from the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the century through the Seven Years’ War in 1763. Constant war was politically consuming and economically expensive. Second, competing visions of empire divided British officials. Old Whigs and their Tory supporters envisioned an authoritarian empire, based on conquering territory and extracting resources. They sought to eliminate Britain’s growing national debt by raising taxes and cutting spending on the colonies. The radical (or Patriot) Whigs’ based their imperial vision on trade and manufacturing instead of land and resources. They argued that economic growth, not raising taxes, would solve the national debt. Instead of an authoritarian empire, “patriot Whigs” argued that the colonies should have equal status with the mother country. There were occasional attempts to reform the administration of the colonies, but debate between the two sides prevented coherent reform.

Amidst the uncertainty, colonists developed their own notions of their place in the empire. They saw themselves as British subjects “entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent, and inseparable rights of our fellow subjects in Great-Britain.” The eighteenth century brought significant economic and demographic growth in the colonies. This success, they believed, resulted partly from Britain’s hands-off approach to the colonies. By mid-century, colonists believed that they held a special place in the empire, which justified Britain’s hands-off policy. In 1764, James Otis Jr. wrote, “The colonists are entitled to as ample rights, liberties, and privileges as the subjects of the mother country are, and in some respects to more.”
In this same period, the colonies developed their own local political institutions. Samuel Adams, in the *Boston Gazette*, described the colonies as each being a “separate body politic” from Britain. Almost immediately upon each colony’s settlement, they created a colonial assembly. These assemblies assumed many of the same duties as the Commons exercised in Britain, including taxing residents, managing the spending of the colonies’ revenue, and granting salaries to royal officials. In the early 1700s, elite colonial leaders lobbied unsuccessfully to get the Ministry to define their assemblies’ legal prerogatives, but the Ministry was too occupied with European wars. In the first half of the eighteenth century, royal governors tasked by the Board of Trade attempted to limit the power of the assemblies, but the assemblies’ power only grew. Many colonists came to see their assemblies as having the same jurisdiction over them that Parliament exercised over those in England. They interpreted British inaction as justifying their tradition of local governance. The British Ministry and Parliament, however, disagreed.

Colonial political culture in the colonies also developed differently than that of the mother country. In both Britain and the colonies, land was the key to political participation, but because land was more easily obtained in the colonies, a higher proportion of male colonists participated in politics. Colonial political culture drew inspiration from the “country” party in Britain. These ideas—generally referred to as the ideology of republicanism—stressed the corrupting nature of power on the individual, the need for those involved in self-governing to be virtuous (i.e., putting the “public good” over their own self-interest) and to be ever vigilant against the rise of conspiracies, centralized control, and tyranny. Only a small fringe in Britain held these ideas, but in the colonies, they were widely accepted.

In the 1740s, two seemingly conflicting bodies of thought—the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening—began to combine in the colonies and challenge older ideas about authority. Perhaps no single philosopher had a greater impact on colonial thinking than John Locke. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke argued that the mind was originally a *tabula rasa* (or blank slate) and that individuals were formed primarily by their environment. The aristocracy then were wealthy or successful because they had greater access to wealth, education, and patronage and not because they were innately superior. Locke followed this essay with *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which introduced radical new ideas about the importance of education. Education would produce rational human beings capable of thinking for themselves and questioning authority rather than tacitly accepting tradition. These ideas slowly came to have far-reaching effects in the colonies and, later, the new nation.
At the same time as Locke’s ideas about knowledge and education spread in North America, the colonies also experienced an unprecedented wave of evangelical Protestant revivalism. In 1739-40, the Rev. George Whitefield, an enigmatic, itinerant preacher, traveled the colonies preaching Calvinist sermons to huge crowds. Unlike the rationalism of Locke, his sermons were designed to appeal to his listeners’ emotions. Whitefield told his listeners that salvation could only be found by taking personal responsibility for one’s own unmediated relationship with God, a process which came to be known as a “conversion” experience. He also argued that the current Church hierarchies populated by “unconverted” ministers only stood as a barrier between the individual and God. In his wake, new traveling preachers picked up his message and many congregations split. Both Locke and Whitefield had empowered individuals to question authority and to take their lives into their own hands.

In other ways, eighteenth-century colonists were becoming more culturally similar to Britons, a process often referred to as “Anglicization.” As the colonial economies grew, they quickly became an important market destination for British manufacturing exports. Colonists with disposable income and access to British markets attempted to mimic British culture. By the middle of the eighteenth century, middling-class colonists could also afford items previously thought of as luxuries like British fashions, dining wares, and more. The desire to purchase British goods meshed with the desire to enjoy British liberties. These political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments built tensions that rose to the surface when, after the Seven Years’ War, Britain finally began to implement a program of imperial reform that conflicted with colonists’ understanding of the empire and their place in it.

III. The Causes of the American Revolution

Most immediately, the American Revolution resulted directly from attempts to reform the British Empire after the Seven Years’ War. The Seven Years’ War culminated nearly a half-century of war between Europe’s imperial powers. It was truly a world war, fought between multiple empires on multiple continents. At its conclusion, the British Empire had never been larger. Britain now controlled the North American continent east of the Mississippi River, including French Canada. It had also consolidated its control over India. But, for the ministry, the jubilation was short-lived. The realities and responsibilities of the post-war empire were daunting. War (let alone victory) on such a scale was costly. Britain doubled the national debt to 13.5 times its annual revenue. In addition to the costs incurred in securing victory, Britain was also looking at significant new costs required to secure and defend its far-flung empire, especially the western frontiers of the North American colonies. These factors led Britain in the 1760s to attempt to
consolidate control over its North American colonies, which, in turn, led to resistance.

King George III took the crown in 1760 and brought Tories into his Ministry after three decades of Whig rule. They represented an authoritarian vision of empire where colonies would be subordinate. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was Britain’s first major postwar imperial action concerning North America. The King forbade settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in an attempt to limit costly wars with Native Americans. Colonists, however, protested and demanded access to the territory for which they had fought alongside the British.

In 1764, Parliament passed two more reforms. The Sugar Act sought to combat widespread smuggling of molasses in New England by cutting the duty in half but increasing enforcement. Also, smugglers would be tried by vice-admiralty courts and not juries. Parliament also passed the Currency Act, which restricted colonies from producing paper money. Hard money, like gold and silver coins, was scarce in the colonies. The lack of currency impeded the colonies’ increasingly sophisticated transatlantic economies, but it was especially damaging in 1764 because a postwar recession had already begun. Between the restrictions of the Proclamation of 1763, the Currency Act, and the Sugar Act’s canceling of trials-by-jury for smugglers, some colonists began to fear a pattern of increased taxation and restricted liberties.

In March 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act. The act required many documents be printed on paper that had been stamped to show the duty had been paid, including newspapers, pamphlets, diplomas, legal documents, and even playing cards. The Sugar Act of 1764 was an attempt to get merchants to pay an already-existing duty, but the Stamp Act created a new, direct (or “internal”) tax. Parliament had never before directly taxed the colonists. Instead, colonies contributed to the empire through the payment of indirect, “external” taxes, such as customs duties. In 1765, Daniel Dulany of Maryland wrote, “A right to impose an internal tax on the colonies, without their consent for the single purpose of revenue, is denied, a right to regulate their trade without their consent is, admitted.” Also, unlike the Sugar Act, which primarily affected merchants, the Stamp Act directly affected numerous groups throughout colonial society, including printers, lawyers, college graduates, and even sailors who played cards. This led, in part, to broader, more popular resistance.

Resistance to the Stamp Act took three forms, distinguished largely by class: legislative resistance by elites, economic resistance by merchants, and popular protest by common colonists. Colonial elites responded with legislative resistance initially by passing resolutions in their assemblies. The most famous of the anti-Stamp Act resolutions were the “Virginia Resolves,” passed by the House of Burgesses on May 30, 1765, which declared that the colonists were entitled to “all the liberties,
privileges, franchises, and immunities . . . possessed by the people of Great Britain.” When the resolves were printed throughout the colonies, however, they often included a few extra, far more radical resolves not passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses, the last of which asserted that only “the general assembly of this colony have any right or power to impose or lay any taxation” and that anyone who argued differently “shall be deemed an enemy to this his majesty’s colony.” The spread of these extra resolves throughout the colonies helped radicalize the subsequent responses of other colonial assemblies and eventually led to the calling of the Stamp Act Congress in New York City in October 1765. Nine colonies sent delegates, including Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, Thomas Hutchinson, Philip Livingston, and James Otis.

The Stamp Act Congress issued a “Declaration of Rights and Grievances,” which, like the Virginia Resolves, declared allegiance to the King and “all due subordination” to Parliament, but also reasserted the idea that colonists were entitled to the same rights as native Britons. Those rights included trial by jury, which had been abridged by the Sugar Act, and the right to only be taxed by their own elected representatives. As Daniel Dulany wrote in 1765, “It is an essential principle of the English constitution, that the subject shall not be taxed without his consent.” Benjamin Franklin called it the “prime Maxim of all free Government.” Because the colonies did not elect members to Parliament, they believed that they were not represented and could not be taxed by that body. In response, Parliament and the Ministry argued that the colonists were “virtually represented,” just like the residents of those boroughs or counties in England that did not elect members to Parliament. However, the colonists rejected the notion of virtual representation, with one pamphleteer calling it a “monstrous idea.”

The second type of resistance to the Stamp Act was economic. While the Stamp Act Congress deliberated, merchants in major port cities were preparing non-importation agreements, hoping that their refusal to import British goods would lead British merchants to lobby for the repeal of the Stamp Act. In New York City, “upwards of two hundred principal merchants” agreed not to import, sell, or buy “any goods, wares, or merchandises” from Great Britain. In Philadelphia, merchants gathered at “a general meeting” to agree that “they would not Import any Goods from Great-Britain until the Stamp-Act was Repealed.” The plan worked. By January 1766, London merchants sent a letter to Parliament arguing that they had been “reduced to the necessity of pending ruin” by the Stamp Act and the subsequent boycotts.

The third, and perhaps, most crucial type of resistance was popular protest. Violent riots broke out in Boston, during which crowds burned the appointed stamp distributor for Massachusetts, Andrew Oliver, in effigy and pulled a building he owned “down to the Ground in five minutes.” Oliver resigned the position
the next day. The following week, a crowd also set upon the home of his brother-in-law, Lt. Gov. Thomas Hutchinson, who had publicly argued for submission to the stamp tax. Before the evening was over, much of Hutchinson’s home and belongings had been destroyed.

Popular violence and intimidation spread quickly throughout the colonies. In New York City, posted notices read:

PRO PATRIA,

The first Man that either
distributes or makes use of Stampt

Paper, let him take care of

his House, Person, & Effects.

Vox Populi;

We dare.”

By November 16, all of the original twelve stamp collectors had resigned, and by 1766, groups who called themselves the “Sons of Liberty” were formed in most of the colonies to direct and organize further popular resistance. These tactics had the dual effect of sending a message to Parliament and discouraging colonists from accepting appointments as stamp collectors. With no one to distribute the stamps, the Act became unenforceable.

Pressure on Parliament grew until, in February of 1766, they repealed the Stamp Act. But to save face and to try to avoid this kind of problem in the future, Parliament also passed the Declaratory Act, asserting that Parliament had the “full power and authority to make laws . . . to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.” However, colonists were too busy celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act to take much notice of the Declaratory Act. In New York City, the inhabitants raised a huge lead statue of King George III in honor of the Stamp Act’s repeal. It could be argued that there was no moment at which colonists felt more proud to be members of the free British Empire than 1766. But Britain still needed revenue from the colonies.

The colonies had resisted the implementation of direct taxes, but the Declaratory Act reserved Parliament’s
right to impose them. And, in the colonists’ dispatches to Parliament and in numerous pamphlets, they had explicitly acknowledged the right of Parliament to regulate colonial trade. So Britain’s next attempt to draw revenues from the colonies, the Townshend Acts, were passed in June 1767, creating new customs duties on common items, like lead, glass, paint, and tea, instead of direct taxes. The Acts also created and strengthened formal mechanisms to enforce compliance, including a new American Board of Customs Commissioners and more vice-admiralty courts to try smugglers. Revenues from customs seizures would be used to pay customs officers and other royal officials, including the governors, thereby incentivizing them to convict offenders. These acts increased the presence of the British government in the colonies and circumscribed the authority of the colonial assemblies, since paying the governor’s salary had long given the assemblies significant power over them. Unsurprisingly, colonists, once again, resisted.

Even though these were duties, many colonial resistance authors still referred to them as “taxes,” because they were designed primarily to extract revenues from the colonies not to regulate trade. John Dickinson, in his “Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer,” wrote, “That we may legally be bound to pay any general duties on these commodities, relative to the regulation of trade, is granted; but we being obliged by her laws to take them from Great Britain, any special duties imposed on their exportation to us only, with intention to raise a revenue from us only, are as much taxes upon us, as those imposed by the Stamp Act.” Hence, many authors asked: once the colonists assented to a tax in any form, what would stop the British from imposing ever more and greater taxes on the colonists?

New forms of resistance emerged in which elite, middling, and working class colonists participated together. Merchants re-instituted non-importation agreements, and common colonists agreed not to consume these same products. Lists were circulated with signatories promising not to buy any British goods. These lists were often published in newspapers, bestowing recognition on those who had signed and led to pressure on those who had not.

Women, too, became involved to an unprecedented degree in resistance to the Townshend Acts. They circulated subscription lists and gathered signatures. The first political commentaries in newspapers written by women appeared. Also, without new imports of British clothes, colonists took to wearing simple, homespun clothing. Spinning clubs were formed, in which local women would gather at one their homes and spin cloth for homespun clothing for their families and even for the community.

Homespun clothing quickly became a marker of one’s virtue and patriotism, and women were an important part of this cultural shift. At the same time, British goods and luxuries previously desired now became
symbols of tyranny. Non-importation, and especially, non-consumption agreements changed colonists’ cultural relationship with the mother country. Committees of Inspection that monitored merchants and residents to make sure that no one broke the agreements. Offenders could expect to be shamed by having their names and offenses published in the newspaper and in broadsides.

Non-importation and non-consumption helped forge colonial unity. Colonies formed Committees of Correspondence to update the progress of resistance in each colony. Newspapers reprinted exploits of resistance, giving colonists a sense that they were part of a broader political community. The best example of this new “continental conversation” came in the wake of the “Boston Massacre.” Britain sent regiments to Boston in 1768 to help enforce the new acts and quell the resistance. On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered outside the Custom House and began hurling insults, snowballs, and perhaps more at the young sentry. When a small number of soldiers came to the sentry’s aid, the crowd grew increasingly hostile until the soldiers fired. After the smoke cleared, five Bostonians were dead, including one of the ringleaders, Crispus Attucks, a former slave turned free dockworker. The soldiers were tried in Boston and won acquittal, thanks, in part, to their defense attorney, John Adams. News of the “Boston Massacre” spread quickly through the new resistance communication networks, aided by a famous engraving initially circulated by Paul Revere, which depicted bloodthirsty British soldiers with grins on their faces firing into a peaceful crowd. The engraving was quickly circulated and reprinted throughout the colonies, generating sympathy for Boston and anger with Britain.
Resistance again led to repeal. In March of 1770, Parliament repealed all of the new duties except the one on tea, which, like the Declaratory Act, was left, in part, to save face and assert that Parliament still retained the right to tax the colonies. The character of colonial resistance had changed between 1765 and 1770. During the Stamp Act resistance, elites wrote resolves and held congresses while violent, popular mobs burned effigies and tore down houses, with minimal coordination between colonies. But methods of resistance against the Townshend Acts became more inclusive and more coordinated. Colonists previously excluded from meaningful political participation now gathered signatures, and colonists of all ranks participated in the resistance by not buying British goods, and monitoring and enforcing the boycotts.

Britain’s failed attempts at imperial reform in the 1760s created an increasingly vigilant and resistant colonial population and, most importantly, an enlarged political sphere—both on the colonial and continental levels—far beyond anything anyone could have imagined a few years earlier. A new sense of shared grievances began to join the colonists in a shared American political identity.

IV. Independence

Following the Boston Massacre in 1770, the conflict between the colonies and the mother country cooled. The colonial economy improved as the postwar recession receded. The Sons of Liberty in some colonies sought to continue nonimportation even after the repeal of the Townshend Acts. But, in New York, a door-to-door poll of the population revealed that the majority wanted to end nonimportation. Yet, Britain’s desire and need to reform imperial administration remained.

In April of 1773, Parliament passed two acts to aid the failing East India Company, which had fallen behind in the annual payments it owed Britain. But the Company was not only drowning in debt; it was also drowning in tea, with almost 15 million pounds of it in stored in warehouses from India to England. So, in 1773, the Parliament passed the Regulating Act, which effectively put the troubled company under government control. It then passed the Tea Act, which would allow the Company to sell its tea in the colonies directly and without the usual import duties. This would greatly lower the cost of tea for colonists, but, again, they resisted.

Merchants resisted because they deplored the East India Company’s monopoly status that made it harder for them to compete. But, like the Sugar Act, it only affected a small, specific group of people. The widespread support for resisting the Tea Act had more to do with principles. By buying the tea, even though it was cheaper, colonists would be paying the duty and thereby implicitly acknowledging Parliament’s right to tax them. According to the Pennsylvania Chronicle, Prime Minister Lord North was a
“great schemer” who sought “to out wit us, and to effectually establish that Act, which will forever after be pleaded as a precedent for every imposition the Parliament of Great-Britain shall think proper to saddle us with.”

The Tea Act stipulated that the duty had to be paid when the ship unloaded. Newspaper essays and letters throughout the summer of 1773 in the major port cities debated what to do upon the ships’ arrival. In November, the Boston Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams and John Hancock, resolved to “prevent the landing and sale of the [tea], and the payment of any duty thereon” and to do so “at the risk of their lives and property.” The meeting appointed men to guard the wharfs and make sure the tea remained on the ships until they returned to London. This worked and the tea did not reach the shore, but by December 16, the ships were still there. Hence, another town meeting was held at the Old South Meeting House, at the end of which dozens of men disguised as Mohawk Indians made their way to the wharf. The Boston Gazette reported what happened next:

But, behold what followed! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships . . . amounting to 342 chests, into the sea ! ! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property.

As word spread throughout the colonies, patriots were emboldened to do the same to the tea sitting in their harbors. Tea was either dumped or seized in Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York, with numerous other smaller “tea parties” taking place throughout 1774.

Popular protest spread across the continent and down through all levels of colonial society. Fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina, for example,
signed an agreement—published in numerous newspapers—in which they promised “to do every Thing as far as lies in our Power” to support the boycotts. The ladies of Edenton were not alone in their desire to support the war effort by what means they could. Women across the thirteen colonies could most readily express their political sentiments as consumer and producers. Because women were often making decisions regarding which household items to purchase, their participation in consumer boycotts held particular weight. Some women also took to the streets as part of more unruly mob actions, participating in grain riots, raids on the offices of royal officials, and demonstrations against the impressment of men into naval service. The agitation of so many helped elicit responses from both Britain and the colonial elites.

Britain’s response was swift. The following spring, Parliament passed four acts known collectively, by the British, as the “Coercive Acts.” Colonists, however, referred to them as the “Intolerable Acts.” First, the Boston Port Act shut down the harbor and cut off all trade to and from the city. The Massachusetts Government Act put the colonial government entirely under British control, dissolving the assembly and restricting town meetings. The Administration of Justice Act allowed any royal official accused of a crime to be tried in Britain rather than by Massachusetts courts and juries. Finally, the Quartering Act, passed for all colonies, allowed the British army to quarter newly arrived soldiers in colonists’ homes. Boston had been deemed in open rebellion, and the King, his Ministry, and Parliament acted decisively to end the rebellion.

The Ministry, however, did not anticipate the other colonies coming to the aid of Massachusetts. Colonists collected food to send to Boston. Virginia’s House of Burgesses called for a day of prayer and fasting to show their support. Rather than isolating Massachusetts, as the Ministry had hoped, the Coercive Acts fostered the sense of shared identity created over the previous decade. After all, if the Ministry and Parliament could dissolve Massachusetts’ government, nothing could stop them from doing the same to any of her sister colonies. In Massachusetts, patriots created the “Provincial Congress,” and, throughout 1774, they seized control of local and county governments and courts. In New York, citizens elected committees to direct the colonies’ response to the Coercive Acts, including a Mechanics’ Committee of middling colonists. By early 1774, Committees of Correspondence and/or extra-legal assemblies were established in all of the colonies except Georgia. And throughout the year, they followed Massachusetts’ example by seizing the powers of the royal governments.

Committees of Correspondence agreed to send delegates to a Continental Congress to coordinate an inter-colonial response. The First Continental Congress convened on September 5, 1774. Over the next six weeks, elite delegates from every colony but
Georgia issued a number of documents, including a “Declaration of Rights and Grievances.” This document repeated the arguments that colonists had been making since 1765: colonists retained all the rights of native Britons, including the right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives as well as the right to trial-by-jury.

Most importantly, the Congress issued a document known as the “Continental Association.” The Association declared that “the present unhappy situation of our affairs is occasioned by a ruinous system of colony administration adopted by the British Ministry about the year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these Colonies, and, with them, the British Empire.” The Association recommended “that a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town … whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association.” These Committees of Inspection would consist largely of common colonists. They were effectively deputized to police their communities and instructed to publish the names of anyone who violated the Association so they “may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty.” The delegates also agreed to a continental non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement and to “wholly discontinue the slave trade.” In all, the Continental Association was perhaps the most radical document of the period. It sought to unite and direct twelve revolutionary governments, establish economic and moral policies, and empower common colonists by giving them an important and unprecedented degree of on-the-ground political power.

But not all colonists were patriots. Indeed, many remained faithful to the King and Parliament, while a good number took a neutral stance. As the situation intensified throughout 1774 and early 1775, factions emerged within the resistance movements in many colonies. Elite merchants who traded primarily with Britain, Anglican clergy, and colonists holding royal offices depended on and received privileges directly from their relationship with Britain. Initially, they sought to exert a moderating influence on the resistance committees but, following the Association, a number of these colonists began to worry that the resistance was too radical and aimed at independence. They, like most colonists in this period, still expected a peaceful conciliation with Britain, and grew increasingly suspicious of the resistance movement.

However, by the time the Continental Congress met again in May 1775, war had already broken out in Massachusetts. On April 19, 1775, British regiments set out to seize local militias’ arms and powder stores in Lexington and Concord. The town militia met them at the Lexington Green. The British ordered the militia to disperse when someone fired, setting off a volley from the British. The battle continued all the way to the next town, Concord. News of the events at Lexington spread rapidly throughout the countryside. Militia members, known as “minutemen,” responded quickly and inflicted significant casualties on the
British regiments as they chased them back to Boston. Approximately 20,000 colonial militiamen lay siege to Boston, effectively trapping the British. In June, the militia set up fortifications on Breed’s Hill overlooking the city. In the misnamed “Battle of Bunker Hill,” the British attempted to dislodge them from the position with a frontal assault, and, despite eventually taking the hill, they suffered severe casualties at the hands of the colonists.

While men in Boston fought and died, the Continental Congress struggled to organize a response. The radical Massachusetts delegates—including John Adams, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock—implied the Congress to support the Massachusetts militia then laying siege to Boston with little to no supplies. Meanwhile, many delegates from the Middle Colonies—including New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia—took a more moderate position, calling for renewed attempts at reconciliation. In the South, the Virginia delegation contained radicals such as Richard Henry Lee and Thomas Jefferson, while South Carolina’s delegation included moderates like John and Edward Rutledge. The moderates worried that supporting the Massachusetts militia would be akin to declaring war.

The Congress struck a compromise, agreeing to adopt the Massachusetts militia and form a Continental Army, naming Virginia delegate, George Washington, commander-in-chief. They also issued a “Declaration of the Causes of Necessity of Taking Up Arms” to justify this decision. At the same time, the moderates drafted an “Olive Branch Petition” which assured the King that the colonists “most ardently desire[d] the former Harmony between [the mother country] and these Colonies.” Many understood that the opportunities for reconciliation were running out. After Congress had approved the document, Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend saying, “The Congress will send one more Petition to the King which I suppose will be treated as the former was, and therefore will probably be the last.” Congress was in the strange position of attempting reconciliation while publicly raising an army.

The petition arrived in England on August 13, 1775, but, before it was delivered, the King issued his own “Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition.” He believed his subjects in North America were being “misled by dangerous and ill-designing men,” who, were “traitorously preparing, ordering, and levying war against us.” In an October speech to Parliament, he dismissed the colonists’ petition. The King had no doubt that the resistance was “manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire.” By the start of 1776, talk of independence was growing while the prospect of reconciliation dimmed.

In the opening months of 1776, independence, for the first time, became part of the popular debate. Town meetings throughout the colonies approved resolutions in support of independence. Yet, with
moderates still hanging on, it would take another seven months before the Continental Congress officially passed the independence resolution. A small forty-six-page pamphlet published in Philadelphia and written by a recent immigrant from England captured the American conversation. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* argued for independence by denouncing monarchy and challenging the logic behind the British Empire, saying, “There is something absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.” His combination of easy language, biblical references, and fiery rhetoric proved potent and the pamphlet was quickly published throughout the colonies. Arguments over political philosophy and rumors of battlefield developments filled taverns throughout the colonies.

George Washington had taken control of the army and after laying siege to Boston forced the British to retreat to Halifax. In Virginia, the royal governor, Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation declaring martial law and offering freedom to “all indentured servants, Negros, and others” if they would leave their masters and join the British. Though only about 500-1000 slaves joined Lord Dunmore’s “Ethiopian regiment,” thousands more flocked to the British later in the war, risking capture and punishment for a chance at freedom. Former slaves occasionally fought, but primarily served as laborers, skilled workers, and spies, in companies called “Black Pioneers.” British motives for offering freedom were practical rather than humanitarian, but the proclamation was the first mass emancipation of enslaved people in American history. Slaves could now choose to run and risk their lives for possible freedom with the British army, or hope that the United States would live up to its ideals of liberty. (*(Pennsylvania Evening Post, September 21, 1776.)*)

Dunmore’s Proclamation had the additional effect of pushing many white Southerners into rebellion. After the Somerset case in 1772 abolished slavery on the British mainland, some American slave-owners began to worry about the growing abolitionist movement in the mother country. Somerset and now Dunmore began to convince some slave owners that a new independent nation might offer a surer protection for slavery. Indeed, the Proclamation laid the groundwork for the very unrest that loyal southerners had hoped to avoid. Consequently, slaveholders often used violence to prevent their slaves from joining the British or rising against them. Virginia enacted regulations to prevent slave defection, threatening to ship rebellious slaves to the West Indies or execute them. Many
masters transported their enslaved people inland, away from the coastal temptation to join the British armies, sometimes separating families in the process.

On May 10, 1776, nearly two months before the Declaration of Independence, the Congress voted a resolution calling on all colonies that had not already established revolutionary governments to do so and to wrest control from royal officials. The Congress also recommended that the colonies should begin preparing new written constitutions. In many ways, this was the Congress’s first declaration of independence. A few weeks later, on June 7, Richard Henry Lee offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

Delegates went scurrying back to their assemblies for new instructions and nearly a month later, on July 2, the resolution finally came to a vote. It was passed 12-0 with New York, under imminent threat of British invasion, abstaining.

The passage of Lee’s resolution was the official legal declaration of independence, but, between the proposal and vote, a committee had been named to draft a public declaration in case the resolution passed. Virginian Thomas Jefferson drafted the document, with edits being made by his fellow committee members John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, and then again by the Congress as a whole. The famous preamble went beyond the arguments about the rights of British subjects under the British Constitution, instead referring to “natural law”:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Goverm-
ments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.

The majority of the document outlined a list of specific grievances that the colonists had with the many actions taken by the British during the 1760s and 1770s to reform imperial administration. An early draft blamed the British for the transatlantic slave trade and even for discouraging attempts by the colonists to promote abolition. Delegates from South Carolina and Georgia as well as those from northern states who profited from the trade all opposed this language and it was removed.

Neither the grievances nor the rhetoric of the preamble were new. Instead, they were the culmination of both a decade of popular resistance to imperial reform and decades more of long-term developments that saw both sides develop incompatible understandings of the British Empire and the colonies’ place within it. The Congress approved the document on July 4, 1776. However, it was one thing to declare independence; it was quite another to win it on the battlefield.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
### Coming of the Revolution Timeline: 1754 - 1776

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1754</td>
<td>Albany Congress met, generated the Albany Plan of Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>William Pitt became Prime Minister of Great Britain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Seven Years’ War/French and Indian War ended with the Treaty of Paris. Pontiac’s Rebellion erupted on the western frontier, and the British passed the Proclamation of 1763.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Sugar Act/Revenue Act passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Stamp Act passed; Virginia Resolved issued; protests against the Stamp Act occurred led by the Sons of Liberty; and, Stamp Act Congress met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Stamp Act repealed; Declaratory Act passed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1767</td>
<td>Townshend duties enacted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>British troops landed in Boston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768 - 1769</td>
<td>Colonial nonimportation agreements made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Boston Massacre occurred; Parliament repealed the Townshend duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>British ship Gaspee burned. First Committee of Correspondence organized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Tea Act passed; Boston Tea party occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Battles of Lexington and Concord; Lord Dunmore promised to free slaves who fled their colonial masters; Second Continental Congress met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Revolution

Earlier, the Coming of the Revolution & Revolutionary War was labeled as an “umbrella experiences.” It fits that classification, because even though the colonies pulled together to fight Britain and to form a new nation, the sectional differences between the North and South were evident throughout the process and did not diminish with the Revolution and formation of the United States of America. From day one, as was reflected in the events of the era, the nation was in essence -- to modify the old phrase - “two nations..., ultimately divisible.” An example of how sectionalism played out was in how Loyalists primarily located in the South and the Patriots primarily located in New England.

Early Government

An important question that historians have examined is whether or not the Revolution changed the lives of Americans. There are key areas of life that are worth examining in relationship to this question:

- Religious Freedom – General religious toleration had increased from the time of initial colonial settlement through to the Revolutionary War. Each colony had an “established church,” meaning a church to which all residents of the colony paid taxes. After the Revolution, states started to disestablish these churches, and gradually states eventually eliminated taxation for religion. Laws for religious freedom spread, as evidenced by Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia Statue for Religious Freedom past in 1786. By the 1830s, the last bastion of religious taxation for established churches gave way in New England, when the Congregationalist church was disestablished.

- Property - With the Revolution came the promise (e.g. from authors such as Thomas Paine in Common Sense) that the average man who fought in the war might be entitled to lands confiscated from the Loyalists or would be able to settle in the lands west of the line drawn by the Proclamation of 1763. But, the era immediately after the Revolution did not see a land boom. Instead, a post-war recession led to over 20% of the population living below the poverty level for the time, with a greater gap between the rich and the poor by 1800 than prior to the war in 1750. Property ownership remained a dream to most Americans. Loyalist lands seized by the Continental Congress were sold off to the highest bidders in order to raise needed funds to conduct the war, meaning that those with property already (the wealthy) were the ones who gained more lands. The West soon became a place for the economically downtrodden, and the Old Northwest still being occupied by British troops slowed down western settlement. In time, and unfortunately for the Native peoples in these areas, settlement would pick up, but
it took about a generation after the war for the opportunity for land ownership to become a reality for more Americans.

- Slavery – At the time of the American Revolution, over 500,000 men and women were in perpetual bondage. Slavery was taken for granted as a normal part of life both in the North and South. The war’s promises of liberty, equality, and freedom were a whites-only concept to those in power, despite the fact that African Americans saw the Revolution as a struggle for freedom for all. Still, there were some who viewed the use of slave labor as a contradiction to the philosophical justification for the Revolution. Some slave owners emancipated their slaves due to this contradiction, but most did not. George Washington freed his slaves via his will, stipulating that only after his wife Martha had passed would the slaves become free persons. Thomas Jefferson the author of the Declaration of Independence did not free his slaves because the labor allowed him to maintain his lifestyle. He also argued that emancipation for all slaves would lead to a racial war, which was a thought not uncommon in the era. In the North, though, were slaver labor was not as entrenched in the economy, abolitionists pressed for the gradual emancipation of slaves, which was a less costly (to slave owners) way of eliminating the institution legally. Abolitionism increased in the North in particular post Revolution. For example, in 1774, Benjamin Franklin organized an abolitionist society in Pennsylvania, and the state declared it illegal in 1780. By about 1800 slave labor was a dying practice in the North, but it remained strong in the South. When freed, African-Americans tended to build neighborhoods and businesses around each other. A number of African-American churches came into existence during this time, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal Church founded by Richard Allen in 1786. Many entered domestic service to whites, but those with skills often found employment, though not typically on an equal pay or rank as whites with the same skills.

- Women – Despite the fact that during the war some women had run businesses and farms, the lives of women did not immediately improve as a result of the Revolution. Legally women remained totally dependent on men. However a new concept arose during and after the Revolution, which came to be known by scholars as “Republican Motherhood.” Through their societally-prescribed and demanded roles as wives and mothers (note gender-role restriction), women were deemed to be the front line through which the values of the republic would survive. Women were to train and help educate virtuous, moral, civic-minded sons who would uphold their obligation to serve the republic for the nation’s greater good. They were to raise “disinterest-
ed citizens,” meaning young men who served the republic without thought of personal gain or interest. To do this, society started to embrace the idea that young women needed to be educated, beyond religious education. In the 1780s-90s, a number of states increased taxation for elementary education, which was the level that included women the most. In 1789, Massachusetts required the taxation for both male and female education. Also, many private schools throughout the colonies opened their doors to girls, and women were allowed to study curriculum traditionally reserved for men: math, science, history. These educational opportunities changed the lives of women over the next hundred plus years; but, for many generations, women were not encouraged to use their education for personal enrichment or advancement, but rather in the service of the republic, their male children, and their husbands. Though married-women’s property rights will be granted legally in various states, mostly married women were deemed as a form of property with few to no legal rights of their own.

- National Unity – Despite the name the United States of America, the now states stillfunctioned with different laws and cultures. Grammatically, it was not uncommon for people to write “The United States of America are,” versus “is.” Thus, once the Revolution appeared as though it was going to be successful, it was understandable that in terms of forming a national government that the leading citizens of the states would be cautious regarding turning too much power over to a central authority. Not only were the states accustomed to their own autonomy, the Revolutionary generation was very fearful of strong-central governments, such as they had just overthrown from Great Britain. Thus, the first government of the United States was a confederation – a government in which the states were stronger than the central government.

**Understanding the Basics**

It is important to understand that the United States of America is a REPUBLIC: “A state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives” (Webster’s Online Dictionary). More specifically, the United States is a representative democracy, versus a direct democracy (in which everyone has a vote on all matters). A democracy is: (again from Webster’s online)

“a : government by the people; especially : rule of the majority b : a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.” The phrase “majority rule” is critical here to our understanding of democracy in its most simple form, as whether via direct democracy or representative democracy, some type of majority is needed.
to pass laws. It is also important to understand that the type of governmental system established by the Constitution was a FEDERATION versus confederation. The goal of moving from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution was to create a federal system in which power is shared between the states and the central government. This power-sharing relationship was not well-defined in terms of how much the central government would do versus the states. Even with the 9th and 10th Amendments, it was (and still is) debated. Moreover, what was debated prior to the Civil War was whether or not the central government was supreme over the states, and if so in what ways. This was a core point of division within the nation.

Understanding the Differences

It is important to know the differences in the form and function of the Articles of Confederation versus the Constitution. The following chart highlights these differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Information about the Articles of Confederation Government (in practice used starting in 1777, but legally in use 1781-89)</th>
<th>Basic Information about the United States Constitution (drafted 1787, legally operational 1789)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Each state had only one vote</td>
<td>• It is a federation, meaning that power is shared between the central government and the states. The 9th &amp; 10th Amendments to the Constitution further define this dynamic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Committees carried out the executive functions of government</td>
<td>• It created the systems of checks and balances at the federal level between the three branches of government: executive, judicial, legislative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It had no legislative or executive branch</td>
<td>• The executive branch administers the laws. The president is like the CEO, who uses departments under him to carry out the laws made by Congress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It had no judicial branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It could not raise troops, despite being able to declare war &amp; maintain a military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It did not have the power to create a unified currency; though, it could coin money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Laws required a 3/4ths majority, unless specified that must be voted upon unanimously</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unanimous votes were needed to amend the Articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Congress could not levy taxes
• Congress could make treaties (conduct foreign affairs) but not regulate foreign commerce
• Congress had no means of compelling states to abide by national laws
• It set Indian-related & territorial-related laws and policies
• It established and ran the postal service

• Congress is the legislative branch, & (due to the Great Compromise) the US government has a bicameral legislative system, meaning that there are two houses (versus unicameral). The each state sends 2 representatives to the Senate, and representation in the House is determined by the population of the states. The two houses must reconcile legislation between them before a bill can become a law (procedures exist to facilitate this process). Additionally, and until the abolishment of slavery, due to the 3/5ths Compromise, slaves counted as part of the population numbers.

• The primary powers of the executive branch are: commander & chief of armed services, chief law enforcement officer, signing/vetoing laws, negotiate/sign treaties, issuing executive orders (to carry out the business of administering laws), issuing pardons, and appointing justices & cabinet members.

• The primary power of the judicial branch is to interpret the Constitution, via reviewing laws made by Congress and the states

• The primary powers of the legislative branch are: passing laws, initiating spending bills (House), impeaching government officers (Senate), approving treaties (Senate), declaring war, and overriding presidential vetoes, via a 2/3rds majority.
Events During the Articles of Confederation Era

Though the Articles of Confederation government was weak, there still were important events and precedents set during the period in which the Articles functioned.

- Indian Relations – Early on it became the responsibility of the central government to manage relations with the Native Americans who now found themselves under the territorial jurisdiction of the United States. The Revolutionary War had weakened the major tribes in the US by 1800; and, though a number of tribes allied with the Americans and the British during the war, they were not brought as equals to peace negotiations that ended the war. Many of the tribes considered themselves still at war with the United States, particularly due to the anticipated encroachment of US settlers on their tribal lands. The white population of the US had increased post-war, and by 1815 was at around eight million. Land was in demand, and this demand meant that Americans wanted the government to remove Native peoples off of desired lands by treaties, battles, and bribes. Removal became the primary policy of the central government.

- Land Surveying and Distribution – Two important pieces of legislation, the premises of which later became part of the Constitution, were birthed under the Articles. The Land Ordinance of 1785 set up the system by which territorial lands were surveyed and divided for sale at one-dollar per acre. Territories were organized into six-mile square blocks that were subdivided into thirty-six one-mile square blocks, with block sixteen being reserved for public schools. The framers valued the concept of public education as being critical to creating and maintain an educated citizenry who would understand the republic and seek, therefore, to perpetuate it. The Northwest Ordinance established the process by which territories became states in the Union. Initially, congress appointed a governor, a secretary, and three justices. When the population of the territory reached 5,000 men, owning at least fifty acres of land, the territory could elect a lower house for a territorial legislature. Congress appointed members to an upper house. When the population reached 60,000 total, then a territory could become a state. A constitutional convention had to be held in which a proposed state constitution would be drafted. That state constitution would then be considered the territory’s application for statehood when submitted to the US Congress as a statehood bill. The Congress of the United States would review the bill (state constitution) and then vote on if the territory should become a state. It is very important to remember that the national Congress deter-
mined if a state could enter the Union. The Northwest Ordinance also established rights for the inhabitants of the region. They were to have: the writ of habeas corpus, free public education, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, trial by jury, and slave labor would not be allowed in the Northwest Territory. Again, it is important to note that the national Congress determined the status of slave labor in the territory, for it became an important precedent to which others would refer later, when the debates over slave versus free labor in the territories heated up.

- Drafting of State Constitutions – Additionally, the original thirteen colonies, now states, were told soon after the Revolution’s start to draft their own constitutions. At the state level, a growing voice for the written, legal protection of individual and natural rights led to a push for states to include guarantees of these rights in their constitutions. The first of the states to draft its constitution was, Massachusetts, which held its convention in 1779. Legal scholar and lawyer, John Adams essentially wrote the document, and much of his ideas and thinking were published nationally. Adams’ legal expertise and scholarship influenced the thinking behind many of the other state constitutions, as well as the national constitution, written by James Madison. The state constitutions also relied on their colonial charters, the English constitution, and the English Bill of Rights. All of the governments formed were: republican in nature, had bills of rights, did not address slave labor or the place of Native Americans within their borders, lessened voting qualifications, and had amendment provisions.

- Financial Problems – The Articles was the government under which the US won its independence from Great Britain, and as such it was the government that first had to grapple with the debt at home and abroad and financial problems caused by the war. Yet, the Articles was restricted on taxation, and the states were very reluctant to tax. The Articles government tried to finance the war by printing currency, which depreciated its value and led to inflation rates so that by 1780 $40.00 of paper money equaled one silver dollar. Some of the framers contributed and lost large sums of their own money to the war effort. In 1781, Robert Morris (nicknamed financier of the Revolution) headed the Department of Finance under the Articles. He wanted to pay soldiers and increase American credit. The main way the Articles could raise money was through tariffs, but the problem was that for tariffing to go into effect all thirteen states had to approve and not all did. Taxation happened at the state level, but state residents were upset with them due to having fought against British taxation.
Shays’s Rebellion – The financial problems caused by the war contributed to the rebellion led by Daniel Shay in Massachusetts in 1786-87. Western farmers in the state resented taxation imposed by a legislature dominated by wealthy Eastern merchants. Shays’s band almost took control over Boston’s legislature, but the state militia dispersed them. This rebellion scared leaders of other states. They feared the Revolution might trigger smaller revolutions and threaten national unity, due to the inability of the Articles government to raise troops independently of the states.

Shays’s Rebellion, financial problems, and other concerns for national unity and survival (especially in light having just fought for independence from Great Britain), led the leaders of the time to consider other options for national governance. After a series of meetings, initially to settle fishing-rights disputes in the Chesapeake, leaders called for another gathering in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the spring of 1787. At this meeting, the fifty-five delegates quickly decided that the Articles should be abandoned and a governing document with a stronger central government needed to be developed. These men had different ideas of how the government should operate, and debates resulted. Many compromises were reached in order for the U.S. Constitution to be completed, approved, and then ratified by the states. Sectionalism was present at the convention. North and South differed on the structure the government should take, as well as on issues of counting population (including slaves) for taxation and representation.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
V. The War for Independence

The war began at Lexington and Concord, more than a year before Congress declared independence. In 1775, the British believed that the mere threat of war and a few minor incursions to seize supplies would be enough to cow the colonial rebellion. Those minor incursions, however, turned into a full-out military conflict. Despite an early American victory at Boston, the new states faced the daunting task of taking on the world’s largest military.

In the summer of 1776, the British forces that had abandoned Boston arrived at New York. The largest expeditionary force in British history, including tens of thousands of German mercenaries known as “Hessians” followed soon after. New York was the perfect location to launch expeditions aimed at seizing control of the Hudson River and isolating New England from the rest of the continent. Also, New York contained many loyalists, particularly among its merchant and Anglican communities. In October, the British finally launched an attack on Brooklyn and Manhattan. The Continental Army took severe losses before retreating through New Jersey. With the onset of winter, Washington needed
something to lift morale and encourage reenlistment. Therefore, he launched a successful surprise attack on the Hessian camp at Trenton on Christmas Day, by ferrying the few thousand men he had left across the Delaware River under the cover of night. The victory won the Continental Army much needed supplies and a morale boost following the disaster at New York.

An even greater success followed in upstate New York. In 1777, in an effort to secure the Hudson River, British General John Burgoyne led an army from Canada through upstate New York. There, he was to meet up with a detachment of General Howe’s forces marching north from Manhattan. However, Howe abandoned the plan without telling Burgoyne and instead sailed to Philadelphia to capture the new nation’s capital. The Continental Army defeated Burgoyne’s men at Saratoga, New York. This victory proved a major turning point in the war. Benjamin Franklin had been in Paris trying to secure a treaty of alliance with the French. However, the French were reluctant to back what seemed like an unlikely cause. News of the victory at Saratoga convinced the French that the cause might not have been as unlikely as they had thought. A “Treaty of Amity and Commerce” was signed on February 6, 1778. The treaty effectively turned a colonial rebellion into a global war as fighting between the British and French soon broke out in Europe and India.

Howe had taken Philadelphia in 1777 but returned to New York once winter ended. He slowly realized that European military tactics would not work in North America. In Europe, armies fought head-on battles in attempt to seize major cities. However, in 1777, the British had held Philadelphia and New York and yet still weakened their position. Meanwhile, Washington realized after New York that the largely untrained Continental Army could not match up in head-on battles with the professional British army. So he developed his own logic of warfare, which involved smaller, more frequent skirmishes and avoided any major engagements that would risk his entire army. As long as he kept the army intact, the war would continue, no matter how many cities the British captured.

In 1778, the British shifted their attentions to the South, where they believed they enjoyed more popular support. Campaigns from Virginia to South Carolina and Georgia captured major cities but the British simply did not have the manpower to retain military control. And, upon their departures, severe fighting ensued between local patriots and loyalists, often pitting family members against one another. The War in the South was truly a civil war.

By 1781, the British were also fighting France, Spain, and Holland. The British public’s support for the costly war in North America was quickly waning. The Americans took advantage of the British southern strategy with significant aid from the French army and navy. In October, Washington marched his troops from New York to Virginia in an effort to trap the
British southern army under the command of Gen. Charles Cornwallis.

Cornwallis had dug his men in at Yorktown awaiting supplies and reinforcements from New York. However, the Continental and French armies arrived first, quickly followed by a French navy contingent, encircling Cornwallis’s forces and, after laying siege to the city, forcing his surrender. The capture of another army left the British without a new strategy and without public support to continue the war. Peace negotiations took place in France and the war came to an official end on September 3, 1783.

Americans celebrated their victory, but it came at great cost. Soldiers suffered through brutal winters with inadequate resources. During the single winter at Valley Forge in 1777-8, over 2,500 Americans died from disease and exposure. Life was not easy on the home front either. Women on both sides of the conflict were frequently left alone to care for their households. In addition to their existing duties, women took on roles usually assigned to men on farms and in shops and taverns. Abigail Adams addressed the difficulties she encountered while “minding family affairs” on their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts. Abigail managed the planting and harvesting of crops, in the midst of severe labor shortages and inflation, while dealing with several tenants on the Adams’ property, raising her children, and making clothing and other household goods. In order to support the family economically during John’s frequent absences and the uncertainties of war, Abigail also invested in several speculative schemes and sold imported goods.

While Abigail remained safely out of the fray, other women were not so fortunate. The Revolution was not only fought on distant battlefields. It was fought on women’s very doorsteps, in the fields next to their homes. There was no way for women to avoid the conflict, or the disruptions and devastations it caused. As the leader of the state militia during the Revolution, Mary Silliman’s husband, Gold, was absent from their home for much of the conflict. On the morning of July 7, 1779, when a British fleet attacked nearby Fairfield, Connecticut, it was Mary who calmly evacuated her household, including her children and servants, to North Stratford. When Gold was captured by loyalists and held prisoner, Mary, six months pregnant with their second child, wrote letters to try to secure his release. When such appeals were ineffectual, Mary spearheaded an effort, along with Connecticut Governor, John Trumbull, to capture a prominent Tory leader to exchange for her husband’s freedom.

Slaves and free blacks also impacted (and were impacted by) the Revolution. The British were the first to recruit black (or “Ethiopian”) regiments, as early as Dunmore’s Proclamation of 1775 in Virginia, which promised freedom to any slaves who would escape their masters and join the British cause. At first, Washington, a slaveholder himself, resisted allowing free blacks and former slaves to join the
Continental Army, but he eventually relented. In 1775, Peter Salem’s master freed him to fight with the militia. Salem faced British Regulars in the battles at Lexington and Bunker Hill, where he fought valiantly with around three-dozen other black Americans. Salem not only contributed to the cause, but he earned the ability to determine his own life after his enlistment ended. Salem was not alone, but many more slaves seized upon the tumult of war to run away and secure their own freedom directly. Historians estimate that between 30,000 and 100,000 slaves deserted their masters during the war.

Men and women together struggled through years of war and hardship. For patriots (and those who remained neutral), victory brought new political, social, and economic opportunities but it also brought new uncertainties. The war decimated entire communities, particularly in the South. Thousands of women throughout the nation had been widowed. The American economy, weighed down by war debt and depreciated currencies, would have to be rebuilt following the war. State constitutions had created governments, but now men would have to figure out how to govern. The opportunities created by the Revolution had come at great cost, in both lives and fortune, and it was left to the survivors to seize those opportunities and help forge and define this new nation-state that they had helped create.

VI. The Consequences of the American Revolution

Like the earlier distinction between “origins” and “causes,” the Revolution also had short- and long-term consequences. Perhaps the most important immediate consequence of declaring independence was the creation of state constitutions in 1776 and 1777. The Revolution also unleashed powerful political, social, and economic forces that would transform the new nation’s politics and society, including increased participation in politics and governance, the legal institutionalization of religious toleration, and the growth and diffusion of the population, particularly westward expansion. The Revolution also had signif-
icant short-term effects on the lives of women in the new United States of America. In the long-term, the Revolution would also have significant effects on the lives of slaves and free blacks as well as the institution of slavery itself. It also affected Native Americans by opening up western settlement and creating governments hostile to their territorial claims. Even more broadly, the Revolution ended the mercantilist economy, opening new opportunities in trade and manufacturing.

The new states drafted written constitutions, which, at the time, was an important innovation from the traditionally unwritten British Constitution. These new state constitutions were based on the idea of “popular sovereignty,” i.e., that the power and authority of the government derived from the people. Most created weak governors and strong legislatures with more regular elections and moderately increased the size of the electorate. A number of states followed the example of Virginia and included a declaration or “bill” of rights in their constitution designed to protect the rights of individuals and circumscribe the prerogative of the government. Pennsylvania’s first state constitution was the most radical and democratic. They created a unicameral legislature and an Executive Council but no genuine executive. All free men could vote, including those who did not own property. Massachusetts’ constitution, passed in 1780, was less democratic in structure but underwent a more popular process of ratification. In the fall of 1779, each town sent delegates—312 in all—to a constitutional convention in Cambridge. Town meetings debated the constitution draft and offered suggestions. Anticipating the later federal constitution, Massachusetts established a three-branch government based on checks and balances between the branches. 1776 was the year of independence, but it was also the beginning of an unprecedented period of constitution-making and state-building.

The Continental Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation in 1781. The Articles allowed each state one vote in the Continental Congress. But the Articles are perhaps most notable for what they did not allow. Congress was given no power to levy or collect taxes, regulate foreign or interstate commerce, or establish a federal judiciary. These shortcomings rendered the post-war Congress rather impotent.

Political and social life changed drastically after independence. Political participation grew as more people gained the right to vote, leading to a greater importance being placed on representation within government. In addition, more common citizens (or “new men”) played increasingly important roles in local and state governance. Hierarchy within the states underwent significant changes. Society became less deferential and more egalitarian, less aristocratic and more meritocratic.

The Revolution’s most important long-term economic consequence was the end of mercantilism. The British Empire had imposed various restrictions on
the colonial economies including limiting trade, settlement, and manufacturing. The Revolution opened new markets and new trade relationships. The Americans’ victory also opened the western territories for invasion and settlement, which created new domestic markets. Americans began to create their own manufactures, no longer content to rely on those in Britain.

Despite these important changes, the American Revolution had its limits. Following their unprecedented expansion into political affairs during the imperial resistance, women also served the patriot cause during the war. However, the Revolution did not result in civic equality for women. Instead, during the immediate post-war period, women became incorporated into the polity to some degree as “republican mothers.” These new republican societies required virtuous citizens and it became mothers’ responsibility to raise and educate future citizens. This opened opportunity for women regarding education, but they still remained largely on the peripheries of the new American polity.

Approximately 60,000 loyalists ended up leaving America because of Revolution. Loyalists came from all ranks of American society, and many lived the rest of their lives in exile from their homeland. A clause in the Treaty of Paris was supposed to protect their property and require the Americans to compensate Loyalists who had lost property during the war because of their allegiance. The Americans, however, reneged on this promise and, throughout the 1780s, the states continued seizing property held by Loyalists. Some colonists went to England, where they were strangers and outsiders in what they had thought of as their mother country. Many more, however, settled on the peripheries of the British Empire throughout the world, especially Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec. The Loyalists had come out on the losing side of a Revolution, and many lost everything they had and were forced to carve out new lives from scratch far from the homes they had known for their entire lives.

In 1783, thousands of Loyalist former slaves fled with the British army. They hoped that the British government would uphold the promise of freedom and help them establish new homes elsewhere in the Empire. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, demanded that British troops leave runaway slaves behind, but the British military commanders upheld earlier promises and evacuated thousands of freedmen, transporting them to Canada, the Caribbean, or Great Britain. They would eventually play a role in settling Nova Scotia, and through the subsequent efforts of David George, a black loyalist and Baptist preacher, some settled in Sierra Leone, in Africa. Black loyalists, however, continued to face social and economic marginalization, including restrictions on land ownership within the British Empire.
The fight for liberty led some Americans to manumit their slaves, and most of the new northern states soon passed gradual emancipation laws. Some manumission also occurred in the Upper South, but in the Lower South, some masters revoked their offers of freedom for service, and other freedmen were forced back into bondage. The Revolution’s rhetoric of equality created a “revolutionary generation” of slaves and free blacks that would eventually encourage the antislavery movement. Slave revolts began to incorporate claims for freedom based on revolutionary ideals. In the long-term, the Revolution failed to reconcile slavery with these new egalitarian republican societies, a tension that eventually boiled over in the 1830s and 1840s and effectively tore the nation in two in the 1850s and 1860s.

Native Americans, too, participated in and were affected by the Revolution. Many Native American tribes and confederacies, such as the Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and Iroquois, had sided with the British. They had hoped for a British victory that would continue to restrain the land-hungry colonial settlers from moving west beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately, the Americans’ victory and Native Americans’ support for the British created a pretense for justifying the rapid, and often brutal expansion into the western territories. Native American tribes would continue to be displaced and pushed further west throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, American independence marked the beginning of the end of what had remained of Native American independence.

VII. Conclusion

The American Revolution freed colonists from British rule and offered the first blow in what historians have called “the age of democratic revolutions.” The American Revolution was a global event. Revolutions
followed in France, then Haiti, and then South America. The American Revolution meanwhile wrought significant changes to the British Empire. Many British historians even use the Revolution as a dividing point between a “first British Empire” and a “second British Empire.” At home, however, the Revolution created a new nation-state, the United States of America. By September of 1783, independence had been won. What that independence would look like, however, was still very much up for grabs. In the 1780s, Americans would shape and then re-shape that nation-state, first with the Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, and then with the Constitution in 1787 and 1788.

Historians have long argued over the causes and character of the American Revolution. Was the Revolution caused by British imperial policy or by internal tensions within the colonies? Were colonists primarily motivated by constitutional principles, ideals of equality, or economic self-interest? Was the Revolution radical or conservative? But such questions are hardly limited to historians. From Abraham Lincoln quoting the Declaration of Independence in his “Gettysburg Address” to modern-day “Tea Party” members wearing knee breeches, the Revolution has remained at the center of American political culture. Indeed, how one understands the Revolution often dictates how one defines what it means to be “American.”

The Revolution was not won by a few “founding fathers.” Men and women of all ranks contributed to the colonies’ most improbable victory, from the commoners protesting against the Stamp Act to the women who helped organize the boycotts to the Townshend duties; from the men, black and white, who fought in the army and the women who contributed to its support. The Revolution, however, did not aim to end all social and civic inequalities in the new nation, and, in the case of Native Americans, created a new degree of inequality. But, over time, the Revolution’s rhetoric of equality, as encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, helped highlight some of those inequalities and became a shared aspiration for future social and political movements, including, among others, the abolitionist and women’s rights movements of the nineteenth century, the suffragist and civil rights movements of the twentieth century, and the gay rights movement of the twenty-first century.

Content provided by The American Yawp
I. Introduction

On July 4, 1788, Philadelphians turned out for a “grand federal procession” in honor of the new national constitution. Workers in various trades and profession demonstrated. Blacksmiths carted around a working forge, on which they symbolically beat swords into farm tools. Potters proudly carried a sign paraphrasing from the Bible, “The potter hath power over his clay,” linking God’s power with an artisan’s work and a citizen’s control over the country. Christian clergymen meanwhile marched arm-in-arm with Jewish rabbis. The grand procession represented what many Americans hoped the United States would become: a diverse but cohesive, prosperous nation.

Over the next few years, Americans would celebrate more of these patriotic holidays. In April 1789, for example, thousands gathered in New York to see George Washington take the presidential oath of office. That November, Washington called his fellow citizens to celebrate with a day of thanksgiving, particularly for “the peaceable and rational manner” in which the government had been established.

But the new nation was never as cohesive as its champions had hoped. Although the officials of the new federal government—and the people who supported it—placed great emphasis on unity and coopera-
tion, the country was often anything but unified. The Constitution itself had been a controversial document adopted to strengthen the government so that it could withstand internal conflicts. Whatever the later celebrations, the new nation had looked to the future with uncertainty. Less than two years before the national celebrations of 1788 and 1789, the United States had faced the threat of collapse.

II. Shays’s Rebellion

In 1786 and 1787, a few years after the Revolution ended, thousands of farmers in western Massachusetts were struggling under a heavy burden of debt. Their problems were made worse by weak local and national economies. Many political leaders saw both the debt and the struggling economy as a consequence of the Articles of Confederation which provided the federal government of no way to raise revenue and did little to create a cohesive nation out of the various states. The farmers wanted the Massachusetts government to protect them from their creditors, but the state supported the lenders instead. As creditors threatened to foreclose on their property, many of these farmers, including Revolutionary veterans, took up arms.

Led by a fellow veteran named Daniel Shays, these armed men, the “Shaysites,” resorted to tactics like the patriots had used before the Revolution, forming blockades around courthouses to keep judges from issuing foreclosure orders. These protestors saw their cause and their methods as an extension of the “Spirit of 1776”; they were protecting their rights and demanding redress for the people’s grievances.

Governor James Bowdoin, however, saw the Shaysites as rebels who wanted to rule the government through mob violence. He called up thousands of militiamen to disperse them. A former Revolutionary general, Benjamin Lincoln, led the state force, insisting that Massachusetts must prevent “a state of anarchy, confusion and slavery.” In January 1787, Lincoln’s militia arrested more than one thousand Shaysites and reopened the courts.

Daniel Shays and other leaders were indicted for treason, and several were sentenced to death, but eventually Shays and most of his followers received pardons. Their protest, which became known as Shays’ Rebellion, generated intense national debate. While
some Americans, like Thomas Jefferson, thought “a little rebellion now and then” helped keep the country free, others feared the nation was sliding toward anarchy and complained that the states could not maintain control. For nationalists like James Madison of Virginia, Shays’ Rebellion was a prime example of why the country needed a strong central government. “Liberty,” Madison warned, “may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power.”

III. The Constitutional Convention

The uprising in Massachusetts convinced leaders around the country to act. After years of goading by James Madison and other nationalists, delegates from twelve of the thirteen states—only Rhode Island declined to send a representative—met at the Pennsylvania state house in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. The delegates arrived at the convention with instructions to revise the Articles of Confederation.

The biggest problem the convention needed to solve was the federal government’s inability to levy taxes. That weakness meant that the burden of paying back debt from the Revolutionary War fell on the states. The states, in turn, found themselves beholden to the lenders who had bought up their war bonds. That was part of why Massachusetts had chosen to side with its wealthy bondholders over poor western farmers.

James Madison, however, had no intention of simply revising the Articles of Confederation. He intended to produce a completely new national constitution. In the preceding year, he had completed two extensive research projects—one on the history of government in the United States, the other on the history of republics around the world. He used this research as the basis for a proposal he brought with him to Philadelphia. It came to be called the Virginia Plan, named after Madison’s home state.

The Virginia Plan was daring. Classical learning said that a republican form of government required a small and homogenous state; the Roman republic, or a small country like Denmark, for example. Citizens who were too far apart or too different could not govern themselves successfully. Conventional wisdom said the United States needed to have a very weak central government, which should simply represent the states on certain matters they had in common. Otherwise, power should stay at the state or local level. But Madison’s research had led him in a different direction. He believed it was possible to create “an extended republic” encompassing a diversity of people, climates, and customs.

The Virginia Plan, therefore, proposed that the United States should have a strong federal government. It was to have three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—with power to act on any issues of national concern. The legislature, or Congress, would
have two houses, in which every state would be represented according to its population size or tax base. The national legislature would have veto power over state laws.

Other delegates to the convention generally agreed with Madison that the Articles of Confederation had failed. But they did not agree on what kind of government should replace them. In particular, they disagreed about the best method of representation in the new Congress. Other issues they debated—including how the national executive branch should work, what specific powers the federal government should have, or even what to do about the divisive issue of slavery—revolved around the issue of representation.

For more than a decade, each state had enjoyed a single vote in the Continental Congress. Small states like New Jersey and Delaware wanted to keep things that way. The Connecticut delegate Roger Sherman, furthermore, argued that members of Congress should be appointed by the state legislatures. Ordinary voters, Sherman said, lacked information, were “constantly liable to be misled,” and “should have as little to do as may be” about most national decisions. Large states, however, preferred the Virginia Plan, which would give their citizens far more power over the legislative branch. James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued that since the Virginia Plan would vastly increase the powers of the national government, representation should be drawn as directly as possible from the public. No government, he warned, “could long subsist without the confidence of the people.”

Ultimately, Roger Sherman suggested a compromise. Congress would have a lower house, the House of Representatives, in which members were assigned according to each state’s population, and an upper house, which became the Senate, in which each state would have one vote. This proposal, after months of debate, was adopted in a slightly altered form as the “Great Compromise”: each state would have two senators, who could vote independently. In addition to establishing both types of representation, this compromise also counted a slave as three-fifths of a person for representation and tax purposes.

The delegates took even longer to decide on the form of the national executive branch. Should executive power be in the hands of a committee or a single person? How should its officeholders be chosen? On June 1, James Wilson moved that the national...
executive power reside in a single person. Coming only four years after the American Revolution, that proposal was extremely contentious; it conjured up images of an elected monarchy. The delegates also worried about how to protect the executive branch from corruption or undue control. They endlessly debated these questions, and not until early September did they decide the president would be elected by a special “electoral college.”

In the end, the Constitutional Convention proposed a government unlike any other, combining elements copied from ancient republics and English political tradition, but making some limited democratic innovations—all while trying to maintain a delicate balance between national and state sovereignty. It was a complicated and highly controversial scheme.

IV. Ratifying the Constitution

The convention voted to send its proposed Constitution to Congress, which was then sitting in New York, with a cover letter from George Washington. The plan for adopting the new Constitution, however, required approval from special state ratification conventions, not just Congress. During the ratification process, critics of the Constitution organized to persuade voters in the different states to oppose it.

Importantly, the Constitutional Convention had voted down a proposal from Virginia’s George Mason, the author of Virginia’s state Declaration of Rights, for a national bill of rights. This omission became a rallying point for opponents of the document. Many of these “Anti-Federalists” argued that without such a guarantee of specific rights, American citizens risked losing their personal liberty to the powerful federal government. The pro-ratification “Federalists,” on the other hand, argued that including a bill of rights was not only redundant but dangerous; it could limit future citizens from adding new rights.

Over the next months, citizens debated the merits of the Constitution in newspaper articles, letters, sermons, and coffeehouse quarrels across America. Some of the most famous, and most important, arguments came from Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison in the Federalist Papers which were published in various New York newspapers in 1787 and 1788. The first crucial vote came at the beginning of 1788 in Massachusetts. At first, the Anti-Federalists at the Massachusetts ratifying
convention probably had the upper hand, but after weeks of debate, enough delegates changed their votes to approve the Constitution narrowly. But they also approved a number of proposed amendments, which were to be submitted to the first Congress. This pattern—ratifying the Constitution but attaching proposed amendments—was followed by other state conventions.

The most high-profile convention was held in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1788, when Federalists like James Madison, Edmund Randolph, and John Marshall squared off against equally influential Anti-Federalists like Patrick Henry and George Mason. Virginia was America’s most populous state, it had produced some of the country’s highest-profile leaders, and the success of the new government rested upon its cooperation. After nearly a month of debate, Virginia voted 89 to 79 in favor of ratification.

On July 2, 1788, Congress announced that a majority of states had ratified the Constitution and that the document was now in effect. Yet this did not mean the debates were over. North Carolina, New York, and Rhode Island had not completed their ratification conventions, and Anti-Federalists still argued that the Constitution would lead to tyranny. The New York convention would ratify the Constitution by just three votes, and finally Rhode Island would ratify it by two votes—a full year after George Washington was inaugurated as president.

V. Rights & Compromises

Although debates continued, Washington’s election as president, and the first eight years of functioning government during his administration, cemented the Constitution’s authority. By 1793, the term “Anti-Federalist” would be essentially meaningless. Yet the debates produced a piece of the Constitution that seems irreplaceable today. Ten amendments to the Constitution were added in 1791. Together, they constitute the Bill of Rights. James Madison, against his original wishes, supported these amendments as an act of political compromise and necessity. He had won election to the House of Representatives only by promising his Virginia constituents such a list of rights.

There was much the Bill of Rights did not cover. Women found here no special protections or guarantee of a voice in government. Many states would continue to restrict voting only to men who owned significant amounts of property. And slavery not only continued to exist; it was condoned and protected by the Constitution.

Of all the compromises that formed the Constitution, perhaps none would be more important than the compromise over the slave trade. Americans generally perceived the Atlantic slave trade (the process of shipping enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere) as more violent and immoral than slavery itself. Many Northerners opposed it on moral grounds. But they also understood that letting
Southern states import more Africans would increase their political power. The Constitution counted each black individual as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation, so in districts with many slaves, the white voters had extra influence. On the other hand, the states of the Upper South also welcomed a ban on the Atlantic trade because they already had a surplus of slaves. Banning importation meant slave owners in Virginia and Maryland could get higher prices when they sold slaves in America. States like South Carolina and Georgia, however, were dependent upon a continued slave trade.

New England and the Deep South agreed to what was called a “dirty compromise” at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. New Englanders agreed to include a constitutional provision that protected the foreign slave trade for twenty years; in exchange, South Carolina and Georgia delegates had agreed to support a constitutional clause that made it easier for Congress to pass commercial legislation. As a result, the Atlantic slave trade resumed until 1808 when it was outlawed for three reasons. First, Britain was also in the process of outlawing the slave trade in 1807, and the United States did not want to concede any moral high ground to its rival. Second, the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), a successful slave revolt against French colonial rule in the West Indies, had changed the stakes in the debate. The image of thousands of armed black revolutionaries terrified white Americans. Third, the Haitian Revolution had ended France’s plans to expand its presence in the Americas, so in 1803, the United States had purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French at a fire-sale price. This massive new territory, which had doubled the size of the United States, had put the question of slavery’s expansion at the top of the national agenda. Many white Americans, including President Thomas Jefferson, thought that ending the external slave trade and dispersing the domestic slave population would keep the United States a white man’s republic and perhaps even lead to the disappearance of slavery.

The ban on the slave trade, however, lacked effective enforcement measures and funding. Moreover, instead of freeing illegally imported Africans, the act left their fate to the individual states, and many of those states simply sold intercepted slaves at auction. Thus, the ban preserved the logic of property ownership in human beings. The new federal government protected slavery as much as it expanded democratic rights and privileges for white men.

Content provided by The American Yawp
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Battle of Bunker Hill won by the British; King George III rejected Olive Branch Petition; Americans lost Battle of Quebec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777 - 1778</td>
<td>Colonial troops wintered at Valley Forge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>France joined the war; British took Savannah, Georgia. State constitutions written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1779</td>
<td>Colonials took western Forts Kaskaskia and Vincennes. Spain entered the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>British took Charleston, South Carolina; French arrived in Rhode Island; British won Battle of Camden; Benedict Arnold declared traitor; and American’s won Battle of King’s Mountain. Pennsylvania law ordered the gradual emancipation of slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>British invaded Virginia; French navy blockaded the Chesapeake Bay; British General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, declaring a British defeat. Robert Morris appointed superintendent of finance (used much of his own money to fund the war). Articles of Confederation ratified. Mum Bett and Quok Walker sued successfully for their freedom in Massachusetts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Peace talks with Great Britain started in France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Treaty of Fort Stanwix signed, with the Six Nations of the Iroquois (Tuscaroras, Mohawks, Onondagas, Oneidas, Senecas, and Cayugas), but the Shawnees, Seneca-Cayuga, Delawares rejected the treaty, and fighting broke out in the Ohio Valley. Post-war Depression started. Rhode Island and Connecticut implemented gradual emancipation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>Land Ordinance of 1785 passed by Congress. Congress requisitioned three million dollars from the states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786 - 1787</td>
<td>Shays’ Rebellion in Massachusetts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### UNIT 3

#### TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>• Constitution ratified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>• Massachusetts ended slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>• New York passed gradual emancipation law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>• New Jersey passed gradual emancipation law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>• International Slave Trade declared illegal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT 4
EARLY REPUBLIC

Overview of the Ideologies

The information on these tables about the two, founding ideologies will be expanded upon as you read the unit materials, and you will want to review these charts as the semester continues. Loosely put, ideologies are world views in political action, and they stem from a variety of life conditions. But, a primary and fundamental factor that shapes a person’s world view is how he or she survives economically. As you read on, the economic basis behind these ideologies will become clear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Hamiltonianism’s Views</th>
<th>Jeffersonianism’s Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followed the thinking of:</td>
<td>Alexander Hamilton</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew political support from:</td>
<td>Merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and holders of large estates</td>
<td>Farmers, artisans, mechanics, small shopkeepers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographically strong in:</td>
<td>Commercial towns and tidewater plantations of the South</td>
<td>Farming communities of the North and frontier sections of the South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on the amount of power the central government should have:</td>
<td>Supported a strong central government</td>
<td>Wanted a weaker, limited central government as to favor state powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional interpretations:</td>
<td>Loose Constructionists, interpreting the Constitution broadly to give the central government more power</td>
<td>Strict Constructionists, interpreting the constitution strictly to restrict the powers of the central government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States Rights:</td>
<td>Viewed that in some circumstances Federal needs could trump the needs of individual states.</td>
<td>Supported states rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Economic Relations:</td>
<td>Favored reestablishing the historic and profitable trade with Great Britain</td>
<td>Favored trade with France for emotional and practical reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on human nature:</td>
<td>Humans were by nature selfish and to be distrusted with political power</td>
<td>Humans were selfish, but improvable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### UNIT 4

**EARLY REPUBLIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views on the common person and majority rule:</th>
<th>Generally distrusted and disparaged, viewed “mob” rule as dangerous to the republic’s survival (see category immediately above)</th>
<th>More trusting of majority vote, but cautious because they also feared “mob” rule by the common man.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Party Name:</td>
<td>Federalists</td>
<td>Democratic-Republicans, Jeffersonian Republicans, or Republicans (In HS211, we’ll use Democratic-Republicans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on military preparedness:</td>
<td>A prepared military (standing military) was necessary, if not vital</td>
<td>Standing military was feared, and considered expensive and unnecessary/ favored militias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on blacks:</td>
<td>Generally viewed as inferior. Most saw slavery as acceptable where it was in the South. Some disliked the institution, while very small minorities were abolitionists.</td>
<td>Generally viewed as inferior, with many owning slaves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues:</th>
<th>Hamiltonianism’s Views</th>
<th>Jeffersonianism’s Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding of the national debt:</td>
<td>Favored taxes and high protective tariffs to promote American industry</td>
<td>Reluctant to tax and disliked protective tariffs; argued these hurt common person’s purchasing power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption of state debts</td>
<td>Favored central government assuming state debts to strengthen its power over the states</td>
<td>Opposed to central government assuming state debts, as felt it would hurt local economies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National bank</td>
<td>Favored to promote industrial vision for America</td>
<td>Opposed in order to preserve agrarian vision for America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Revolution</td>
<td>Abhorred as the worst example of mob-rule</td>
<td>Supported, though over time withdrew full support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proclamation of Neutrality toward France’s war</td>
<td>Favored in order to preserve U.S. trade interests with Great Britain</td>
<td>Ultimately favored in order to preserve U.S. trade interests with France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT 4
EARLY REPUBLIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whiskey Rebellion</th>
<th>Vigorously suppressed and revealed the central government’s military powers under the Constitution</th>
<th>Saw as insignificant, except for the issue of taxation on the Jeffersonian farmers involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jay’s Treaty</td>
<td>This was mostly politics – supported Jay’s treaty as having stopped war with preferred trading partner, Great Britain.</td>
<td>Mostly opposed to it for political reasons, using it to promote their Francophilia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XYZ Affair</td>
<td>This was mainly just politics at work, defended Adam’s administration</td>
<td>Again, it mainly was used politically to attack Adam’s administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Throughout the semester, you should be able to continue this list of differences between the Hamiltonians (supporters of strong central government) and Jeffersonians (those favoring state powers), linking these ideologies to the parties existing in later generations. AND, you should be able to trace how Hamiltonianism became a North view for America, while Jeffersonianism, with States Rights, became a Southern vision for America.

The Party System

Political parties are ideologies in action! What is more important is the ideology that a party represents. So really the names mean little, except as rhetorical devices. They could have just as easily named themselves the Daisies and Roses! The names wouldn’t have changed the underlining ideological struggle. This chart will help you understand the chronology of the party names representing the two competing national ideologies. Note that there was a gap between the first and second party system. Why? That was because the Hamiltonians did not have a strong, national party structure during those years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party System</th>
<th>Political party of the era embracing the Hamiltonian ideology:</th>
<th>Political party of the era embracing the Jeffersonian ideology:</th>
<th>Approximate years of party systems:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Federalist</td>
<td>Jeffersonian Republicans or Democratic-Republican (particularly later)</td>
<td>1798 - 1816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# UNIT 4

## EARLY REPUBLIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Whig (preceded by National Republicans)</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>1836 - 1850s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Democrat (Note: split into northern &amp; southern wings 1860)</td>
<td>1854 - Civil War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rise of Political Parties

Although the Constitution said nothing about political parties and many founding fathers proclaimed a dislike for them, very early in George Washington’s administration political factions developed. These factions grew into political parties with two distinct and competing ideologies. It is critical to understand these ideologies, as they directly influenced the politics of sectionalism, especially over time. Early on, the opposing ideologies got support from all over the country, but as time went on the ideologies rooted in the North and South separately, becoming the sectional ideologies that led to civil war.

The two ideologies were Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism. The followers of Alexander Hamilton’s thinking (Hamiltonians) wanted a strong central government and interpreted the Constitution loosely. The supporters of Thomas Jefferson (Jeffersonians) wanted the states to hold the majority of power over a limited central government, and they interpreted the Constitution strictly.

The political factions formed into parties because of a perceived need to take a stand on the major issues facing the country and its operation during Washington’s administration. The two parties were the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans. The Federalists were the devotees of Hamiltonian ideology, while the Democratic Republicans were the students of Jeffersonian thinking. The term “first party system” refers to era in U.S. history when these two parties existed, side-by-side and in competition with each other. The Federalists died out as a viable national party after John Adams’ administration, and for a time the Democratic-Republicans were the only major national party (containing both Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian elements). However, even though party names changed in the time between Washington’s administration and the Civil War, the ideologies of Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism remained the basis for the major partisan (and later sectional) differences in the nation. Next, read to learn how and why the parties formed and acted as they did during Washington’s and Adams’ administrations.

Washington’s Administration

The Ideologically Divisive Issues Creating “Politics as Usual; Leading to the Formation of the First Political Parties”

Financial Matters:

National Bank: Hamilton argued that the federal government, having the Constitutional right to charter corporations, could establish a national bank. Hamilton wanted a national bank in order to: stabilize the economy, facilitate tax collection, issue a uniform currency to replace state monies, give the federal government a place to deposit funds, and provide wealthy men with a place to invest money and get credit (loans). The bank would: be chartered by Congress with an initial investment of $10 million, be 80%
privately funded, be 20% government funded, have 5 federal bank directors and 20 private directors, and be under federal supervision.

Criticisms against the bank by the Jeffersonians were that: the Constitution had not made provisions for the establishment of a national bank; the consolidation of federal funds would weaken the economy of the states; and, Hamilton and others would use the bank to consolidate power and overthrow republicanism in America in order to establish a British form of government in the country. Washington was concerned about the Constitutionality of the issue but ultimately decided that Hamilton was correct. Washington signed the bank bill in 1791 that would charter the bank to run for 20 years, ending in 1811.

Public Debt:
Hamilton compiled his “Report on Public Credit” in 1790 in which he classified the country’s debts into three categories: foreign debts (e.g. to France), state debts (debts that individual states had from financing war efforts), and national debts (in the form of government notes issued by the Second Continental Congress to finance the war). Hamilton argued that, in order to borrow money and attract foreign investors, the U.S. needed to make good on its debts. Therefore, he proposed that the federal government should assume responsibility for all three of the debt-types. Jeffersonian opponents claimed that if the government assumed the debts it would hurt the economy of the states and the purchasing power of the common person.

In Congress, the Senate approved a bill on the matter, but it met with difficulties in the House. A compromise was reached. The U.S. capitol was moved from New York City to an area carved out of swamp lands and named the District of Columbia. The compromise appeased Southerners, who wanted the capitol closer to their section. The bill then passed Congress, and Washington signed it into law in 1791.

Taxes:
Hamilton believed that protective tariffs were necessary to protect fledgling American industries. Many, especially Southerners were opposed to the tariffs, because of fears that they would interfere with the export of American goods and hurt individual purchasing power. Hamilton also encouraged domestic taxes like the Whiskey Tax of 1791. The Whiskey Rebellion resulted when the farmers in western Pennsylvania revolted against paying the tax, due to local grain and whiskey production. Americans were divided on the issue. Political opponents of the tax saw it as an example of the abuses of a strong central government, while grain farmers saw it as the government being deaf to their regional interests.

Foreign Affairs
The French Revolution:
In 1789, as Washington began as president, the French Revolution started with the July 14th storming of the Bastille (a prison). Men like Jefferson were elated
by the news and felt that the American Revolution started a wave of anti-monarchial sentiment globally. The French Revolution, though turned extremist, with revolutionaries overthrowing revolutionaries. Even Jefferson came to dislike the situation in France. Additionally, the French became territorially aggressive and entered into war with England, Spain, Austria, and Prussia. In order to protect its West Indies colonies from the British, France called upon the U.S. live up to its obligation of mutual defense in the Treaty of Alliance of 1778. Men like Jefferson supported doing something for France, though not necessarily fighting on France’s behalf in the West Indies. Jefferson did not want to lose France as an economic trading partner. Hamiltonians, who favored trade with Great Britain did not want to uphold the treaty, as they feared it would spoil relations with Britain, possibly to the point of warfare. The debate of whether or not to side with France raged on in the country. The domestic situation got worse when Frenchman, Edmund Genet (Citizen Genet) actively campaigned around the U.S. against Washington’s administration and tried to provoke incidents between the U.S. and Spain. Genet was welcomed by some, but even many Jeffersonians felt that Genet’s efforts to gain U.S. support went too far for a foreigner. Eventually in 1793, Washington declared the U.S. neutral toward France’s war and formally repudiated the Treaty of 1778, weakly arguing that, since the government with which the treaty had been made was no longer in power, the treaty was null and void. Domestically and internationally, the U.S. could not afford getting involved in a European war, and declaring neutrality for those reasons rationalized the country’s position. Despite neutrality, it was not long before the US warred with France and then later Great Britain.

Neutral Rights on the High Seas:
By declaring neutrality, the U.S. did not gain European friends. The U.S. was not concerned about losing military friendships, but rather economic alliances. Both Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians felt that they had the best interests of the nation at heart, economically; they just went about it differently. The Hamiltonians favored trade with the British, while the Jeffersonians favored trading with France. Whenever it was possible, both factions intended to use European disadvantages for American gains. Just like as in the colonial era, the U.S. wanted to trade with anyone and everyone. The war between France and the other European nations left a trade vacuum on the high seas that U.S. merchants intended to fill. However in so doing, merchant vessels put themselves at risk of seizure and attack by the warring powers of Europe, especially by the British and the French fleets. The U.S. held to the principle of protecting the rights of neutral powers on the high seas (freedom of the seas). Essentially, this principle simply justified the economic agenda of the U.S. (of trading with anyone and everyone). But, the British and the French were not concerned with principles offered by a third-rate power. As part of war tactics, the British and French implemented a series of blockades on one another and expected the nations of the world to honor those blockades. Both Britain
and France did not respect U.S. neutrality and seized American vessels and cargoes, suspecting that American merchants were trading with the enemy. This fact angered Americans, however not as much as when the British impressed American merchant marines into the British navy. On U.S. soil, Anglophobes attacked English seamen and tarred and feathered Anglophiles.

Washington reacted to all of the turmoil by sending a diplomat, John Jay, to negotiate a treaty with the British. The goals were for Jay to compromise with the British to prevent war, to end impressment, and to get the British to recognize freedom of the seas for neutral powers. Jay negotiated a treaty (Jay’s Treaty), but he did not get for what he set out. Instead he got the British to agree to leave western forts and to give the U.S. trading rights with areas of the British West Indies. In exchange, the U.S. was responsible for paying pre-Revolutionary War debts to Britain. Jay did not get an end to impressment nor recognition of freedom of the seas. Returning with the treaty to be presented for Senate approval, Jay faced an onslaught of Jeffersonian criticism. The Democratic-Republicans condemned the treaty and attacked Washington for his role in it. The Federalists hailed the treaty for keeping peace with the British. The treaty narrowly passed the Senate in 1795.

All of the dynamics with foreign affairs encouraged Washington, in his Farewell Address, to set a tone for the nation diplomatically. He warned against making “entangling alliances,” such as the Treat of Alliance with France. The U.S., he argued, should keep out of the affairs of Europe by avoiding political treaties and treaties of mutual defense. This set the tone for American diplomatic policy until the 20th century. Americans fancied themselves isolationists from world affairs, however this was not true economically. The U.S. was never truly isolationist, because it was actively engaged in the world economy. (In his address, Washington also gave political support for Federalist presidential candidate John Adams.)

Western Affairs

Native American Relations:  
Apart from the Whiskey Rebellion, western affairs were important in Washington’s administrations. In 1794, the Battle of Fallen Timbers in the Northwest Territory saw Kentucky riflemen defeat several Indian tribes in the region. This weakened the Nishnabi and ultimately led to the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 in which the Northwest Territory Indians were paid $10,000 for their lands. This yielded area became the Ohio territory.

Relations with Spain:  
In 1795 the U.S. and Spain signed Pinckney’s Treaty, which opened trade to the U.S. on the Spanish-controlled Mississippi River and gave the U.S. the right of departure from the port of New Orleans. The Spanish also promised to stop encouraging Indian raids from Florida (then controlled by Spain), into US territory.
Adam’s Administration

The Election of 1796:
Since the founding fathers did not make provisions in the Constitution for the party system that developed in the Early Republic, the electoral process did not account for party divisions. Ideally, there only was to be one party, and there was no need for electing candidates on separate ballots. Thus, in the election of 1796, the president was elected based on who had the highest number of votes, while the vice-president was the individual who came in with the second highest number of votes (from one overall list of candidates). In this election, the Democratic-Republicans ran Thomas Jefferson as intended president with Aaron Burr as anticipated vice-president. The Federalists wanted John Adams for the presidency, with Thomas Pickney for the vice-presidency. Because of the ballot system, instead, the nation elected President John Adams (Fed.) and Vice-President Thomas Jefferson (D-R). This fact did not make the Adams Administration a “happy” place.

Naval War with France:
During Adams’ administration the nation was embroiled in an undeclared naval war with France, which resulted in the infamous “XYZ Affair.” Adams ultimately averted further problems with the French by signing a treaty in 1800 that ended the unofficial conflict. Before that though, Adams ceased trade with France, established a Department of Navy, and ordered the construction of warships. The Democratic-Republicans and Jefferson opposed these measures, attacking Adams and his supporters in Congress, the press, and in public speeches.

Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798:
The Alien and Sedition Acts brought Adams the most problems. With poor diplomatic relations with France occupying the nation’s attention, the Federalists in power used the opportunity to propose legislation. These changes intended to reduce political opposition to the Federalist party from the Democratic-Republicans, who opposed the war with France and other Federalist programs. Under the guise of nationalism, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts. However, it is important to note that such acts were commonplace through Europe and most states in the Union. An attempt to nationalize such legislation was an understandable move by Federalists given the political context. However, in so doing, the public had an opportunity to decide if sedition acts (in particular) were appropriate in a republic. Democratic-Republicans argued an effective case against the acts as being monarchical, thus arousing public opinion against them.

The Alien Act authorized the president to remove from the country any alien seen as dangerous to national security. Federalists still were reeling from the actions of Citizen Genet, and they wanted to remove foreigners who tried to undermine
the authority of a president. The Naturalization Act extended the number of years to become a naturalized citizen from 5 to 14. The reason for so doing was to discourage immigrants from supporting the Democratic-Republicans, once they became citizens. The Sedition Act was the most famous of the three acts. It was designed to silence the political opposition of the Democratic-Republicans (Sedition means to stir rebellion or violence). The act made it illegal to print or speak out against the government, the flag, or a government official.

In part, as a result of the Alien and Sedition Acts and other Federalist measures, the Democratic-Republicans gained voter support. The Election of 1800 was a victory for the Democratic-Republicans, with Jefferson winning the presidency. Because this was the first time, in the nation’s brief history under the Constitution, that there was an ideological shift in the nation’s leadership, the election was nicknamed the “Revolution of 1800.”

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
VI. Hamilton’s Financial System

Meanwhile, during George Washington’s presidency, political trouble was already brewing. Washington’s cabinet choices reflected continuing tension between politicians who wanted and who feared a powerful national government. The vice president was John Adams, and Washington chose Alexander Hamilton to be his secretary of the treasury. Both men wanted an active government that would promote prosperity by supporting American industry. However, Washington chose Thomas Jefferson to be his secretary of state, and Jefferson was committed to restricting federal power and preserving an economy based on agriculture. Almost from the beginning, Washington struggled to reconcile the “Federalist” and “Republican” (or Democratic-Republican) factions within his own administration.

Alexander Hamilton believed that self-interest was the “most powerful incentive of human actions.” Self-interest drove humans to accumulate property, and that effort created commerce and industry. According to Hamilton, government had important roles to play...
in this process. First, the state should protect private property from theft. Second, according to Hamilton, the state should use human “passions” and “make them subservient to the public good.” In other words, a wise government would harness its citizens’ desire for property so that both private individuals and the state would benefit.

Hamilton, like many of his contemporary statesmen, did not believe the state should ensure an equal distribution of property. Inequality was “the great & fundamental distinction in Society,” and Hamilton saw no reason to change this reality. Instead, Hamilton wanted to tie the economic interests of wealthy Americans, or “monied men,” to the federal government’s financial health. If the rich needed the government, then they would direct their energies to making sure it remained solvent.

Hamilton, therefore, believed that the federal government must be “a Repository of the Rights of the wealthy.” As the nation’s first secretary of the treasury, he proposed an ambitious financial plan to achieve that.

The first part of Hamilton’s plan involved federal “assumption” of state debts, which were mostly left over from the Revolutionary War. The federal government would assume responsibility for the states’ unpaid debts, which totaled about $25 million. Second, Hamilton wanted Congress to create a bank—a Bank of the United States.

The goal of these proposals was to link federal power and the country’s economic vitality. Under the assumption proposal, the states’ creditors (people who owned state bonds or promissory notes) would turn their old notes in to the Treasury and receive new federal notes of the same face value. Hamilton foresaw that these bonds would circulate like money, acting as “an engine of business, and instrument of industry and commerce.” This part of his plan, however, was controversial for two reasons.

First, many taxpayers objected to paying the full face value on old notes, which had fallen in market value. Often the current holders had purchased them from the original creditors for pennies on the dollar. To pay them at full face value, therefore, would mean rewarding speculators at taxpayer expense. Hamilton countered that government debts must be honored in full, or else citizens would lose all trust in the government. Second, many southerners objected that they had already paid their outstanding state debts, so federal assumption would mean forcing them to pay again for the debts of New Englanders. Nevertheless, President Washington and Congress both accepted Hamilton’s argument. By the end of 1794, 98 percent of the country’s domestic debt had been converted into new federal bonds.

Hamilton’s plan for a Bank of the United States, similarly, won congressional approval despite strong opposition. Thomas Jefferson and other Republicans argued that the plan was unconstitutional; the
The Constitution did not authorize Congress to create a bank. Hamilton, however, argued that the bank was not only constitutional but also important for the country’s prosperity. The Bank of the United States would fulfill several needs. It would act as a convenient depository for federal funds. It would print paper banknotes backed by specie (gold or silver). Its agents would also help control inflation by periodically taking state bank notes to their banks of origin and demanding specie in exchange, limiting the amount of notes the state banks printed. Furthermore, it would give wealthy people a vested interest in the federal government’s finances. The government would control just twenty percent of the bank’s stock; the other eighty percent would be owned by private investors. Thus, an “intimate connexion” between the government and wealthy men would benefit both, and this connection would promote American commerce.

In 1791, therefore, Congress approved a twenty-year charter for the Bank of the United States. The bank’s stocks, together with federal bonds, created over $70 million in new financial instruments. These spurred the formation of securities markets, which allowed the federal government to borrow more money and underwrote the rapid spread of state-charted banks and other private business corporations in the 1790s. For Federalists, this was one of the major purposes of the federal government. For opponents who wanted a more limited role for industry, however, or who lived on the frontier and lacked access to capital, Hamilton’s system seemed to reinforce class boundaries and give the rich inordinate power over the federal government.

Hamilton’s plan, furthermore, had another highly controversial element. In order to pay what it owed on the new bonds, the federal government needed reliable sources of tax revenue. In 1791, Hamilton proposed a federal excise tax on the production, sale, and consumption of a number of goods, including whiskey.

### VIII. The French Revolution and the Limits of Liberty

In part, the Federalists were turning toward Britain because they feared the most radical forms of democratic thought. In the wake of Shays’ Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, and other internal protests, Federalists sought to preserve social stability. And the course of the French Revolution seemed to justify their concerns.

In 1789, news had arrived in America that the French had revolted against their king. Most Americans had imagined that the idea of liberty was spreading from America to Europe, carried there by the returning French heroes who had taken part in the American Revolution.

Initially, nearly all Americans had sung the French Revolution’s praises. Towns all over the country had hosted speeches and parades on July 14 to commemorate the day it began. Women had
worn neoclassical dress in honor of its republican principles, and men had pinned revolutionary cockades to their hats. John Randolph, a Virginia planter, named two of his favorite horses “Jacobin” and “Sans-Culotte” after French revolutionary factions.

In April 1793, a new French ambassador, “Citizen” Edmond-Charles Genêt, had arrived in the United States. During his tour of several cities, Americans had greeted him with wild enthusiasm. Citizen Genêt had encouraged Americans to act against Spain, a British ally, by attacking its colonies of Florida and Louisiana. When President Washington had refused, Genêt had threatened to appeal to the American people directly. In response, Washington had demanded that France recall its diplomat. In the meantime, however, Genêt’s faction had fallen from power in France. Knowing that a return home might cost him his head, he decided to remain in America.

Genêt’s intuition was correct. A radical coalition of revolutionaries had seized power in France. They had initiated a bloody purge of their enemies, the “Reign of Terror.” As Americans learned not only about Genêt’s impropriety but also the mounting body count in France, many of them began to have second thoughts about the French Revolution.

Americans who feared that the French Revolution was spiraling out of control tended to become Federalists. Those who remained hopeful about the revolution tended to become Republicans. Not deterred by the violence, Thomas Jefferson declared that he would rather see “half the earth desolated” than see the French Revolution fail. “Were there but an Adam and an Eve left in every country, and left free,” he wrote, “it would be better than as it now is.” Meanwhile, the Federalists sought closer ties with Britain. Despite the political rancor, in late 1796 there came one sign of hope: the United States peacefully elected a new president. For now, as Washington stepped down and executive power changed hands, the country did not descend into the anarchy that many leaders feared.

The new president was John Adams, Washington’s vice president. Adams was less beloved than the old general, and he governed a nation that was deeply divided. The foreign crisis also presented him with a major test.
In response to Jay’s Treaty, the French government authorized its vessels to attack American shipping. To resolve this, President Adams sent envoys to France in 1797. The French insulted these diplomats. Some officials, whom the Americans code-named “X,” “Y,” and “Z” in their correspondence, hinted that negotiations could begin only after the Americans offered a bribe. When the story became public, this “X.Y.Z. Affair” infuriated American citizens. Dozens of towns wrote addresses to President Adams, pledging him their support against France. Many people seemed eager for war. “Millions for defense,” toasted South Carolina representative Robert Goodloe Harper, “but not one cent for tribute.”

By 1798, the people of Charleston watched the ocean’s horizon apprehensively because they feared the arrival of the French navy at any moment. Many people now worried that the same ships that had aided Americans during the Revolutionary War might discharge an invasion force on their shores. Some southerners were sure that this force would consist of black troops from France’s Caribbean colonies, who would attack the southern states and cause their slaves to revolt. Many Americans also worried that France had covert agents in the country. In the streets of Charleston, armed bands of young men searched for French disorganizers. Even the little children prepared for the looming conflict by fighting with sticks.

Meanwhile, during the crisis, New Englanders were some of the most outspoken opponents of France. In 1798, they found a new reason for Francophobia. An influential Massachusetts minister, Jedidiah Morse, announced to his congregation that the French Revolution had been hatched in a conspiracy led by a mysterious anti-Christian organization called the Illuminati. The story was a hoax, but rumors of Illuminati infiltration spread throughout New England like wildfire, adding a new dimension to the foreign threat.

Against this backdrop of fear, the French “Quasi-War,” as it would come to be known, was fought on the Atlantic, mostly between French naval vessels and American merchant ships. During this crisis, however, anxiety about foreign agents ran high, and members of Congress took action to prevent internal subversion. The most controversial of these steps were the Alien and Sedition Acts. These two laws, passed in 1798, were intended to prevent French agents and sympathizers from compromising America’s resistance, but they also attacked Americans who criticized the President and the Federalist Party.

The Alien Act allowed the federal government to deport foreign nationals, or “aliens,” who seemed to pose a national security threat. Even more dramatically, the Sedition Act allowed the government to prosecute anyone found to be speaking or publishing “false, scandalous, and malicious writing” against the government.
These laws were not simply brought on by war hysteria. They reflected common assumptions about the nature of the American Revolution and the limits of liberty. In fact, most of the advocates for the Constitution and First Amendment accepted that free speech simply meant a lack of prior censorship or restraint—not a guarantee against punishment. According to this logic, “licentious” or unruly speech made society less free, not more. James Wilson, one of the principal architects of the Constitution, argued that “every author is responsible when he attacks the security or welfare of the government.”

In 1798, most Federalists were inclined to agree. Under the terms of the Sedition Act, they indicted and prosecuted several Republican printers—and even a Republican congressman who had criticized President Adams. Meanwhile, although the Adams administration never enforced the Alien Act, its passage was enough to convince some foreign nationals to leave the country. For the president and most other Federalists, the Alien and Sedition Acts represented a continuation of a conservative rather than radical American Revolution.

However, the Alien and Sedition Acts caused a backlash, in two ways. First, shocked opponents articulated a new and expansive vision for liberty. The New York lawyer Tunis Wortman, for example, demanded an “absolute independence” of the press. Likewise, the Virginia judge George Hay called for “any publication whatever criminal” to be exempt from legal punishment. Many Americans began to argue that free speech meant the ability to say virtually anything without fear of prosecution.

Second, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson helped organize opposition from state governments. Ironically, both of them had expressed support for the principle behind the Sedition Act in previous years. Jefferson, for example, had written to Madison in 1789 that the nation should punish citizens for speaking “false facts” that injured the country. Nevertheless, both men now opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts on constitutional grounds. In 1798, Jefferson made this point in a resolution that the Kentucky state legislature adopted. A short time later, the Virginia legislature adopted a similar document that Madison wrote.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions argued that the national government’s authority was limited to the powers expressly granted by the U.S. Constitution. More importantly, they asserted that the states could declare federal laws unconstitutional. For the time being, these resolutions were simply gestures of defiance. Their bold claim, however, would have important effects in later decades.

In just a few years, many Americans’ feelings towards France had changed dramatically. Far from rejoicing in the “light of freedom,” many Americans now feared the “contagion” of French-style liberty. Debates over the French Revolution in the 1790s...
gave Americans some of their earliest opportunities to articulate what it meant to be American. Did American national character rest on a radical and universal vision of human liberty? Or was America supposed to be essentially pious and traditional, an outgrowth of Great Britain? They couldn’t agree. It was upon this cracked foundation that many of conflicts of the nineteenth century would rest.

IX. Religious Freedom

One reason the debates over the French Revolution became so heated was that Americans were unsure about their own religious future. The Illuminati scare of 1798 was just one manifestation of this fear. Across the United States, a slow but profound shift in attitudes toward religion and government was underway. In 1776, none of the American state governments observed the separation of church and state. On the contrary, all thirteen states either had established (that is, official and tax-supported) state churches or required their officeholders to profess a certain faith. Most officials believed this was necessary to protect morality and social order. Over the next six decades, however, that changed. In 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, stopped supporting an official religious denomination. Historians call that gradual process “disestablishment.”

In many states, the process of disestablishment had started before the creation of the Constitution.

South Carolina, for example, had been nominally Anglican before the Revolution, but it had dropped denominational restrictions in its 1778 constitution. Instead, it now allowed any church consisting of at least fifteen adult males to become “incorporated,” or recognized for tax purposes as a state-supported church. Churches needed only to agree to a set of basic Christian theological tenets, which were vague enough that most denominations could support them. Thus, South Carolina tried to balance religious freedom with the religious practice that was supposed to be necessary for social order. Officeholders were still expected to be Christians; their oaths were witnessed by God, they were compelled by their religious beliefs to tell the truth, and they were called to live according to the Bible. This list of minimal requirements came to define acceptable Christianity in many states. As new Christian denominations proliferated between 1780 and 1840, however, more and more Christians would fall outside of this definition. The new denominations would challenge the assumption that all Americans were Christians.

South Carolina continued its general establishment law until 1790, when a constitutional revision removed the establishment clause and religious restrictions on officeholders. Many other states, though, continued to support an established church well into the nineteenth century. The federal Constitution did not prevent this. The religious freedom clause in the Bill of Rights, during these
decades, limited the federal government but not state governments. It was not until 1833 that a state supreme court decision ended Massachusetts’s support for the Congregational church.

Many political leaders, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, favored disestablishment because they saw the relationship between church and state as a tool of oppression. Jefferson proposed a Statute for Religious Freedom in the Virginia state assembly in 1779, but his bill failed in the overwhelmingly Anglican legislature. Madison proposed it again in 1785, and it defeated a rival bill that would have given equal revenue to all Protestant churches. Instead Virginia would not use public money to support religion. “The Religion then of every man,” Jefferson wrote, “must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.”

At the federal level, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 easily agreed that the national government should not have an official religion. This principle was upheld in 1791 when the First Amendment, with its guarantee of religious liberty, was ratified. The limits of federal disestablishment, however, required discussion. The federal government, for example, supported Native American missionaries and Congressional chaplains. Well into the nineteenth century, debate raged over whether postal service should operate on Sundays, and whether non-Christians could act as witnesses in federal courts. Americans continued to struggle to understand what it meant for Congress not to “establish” a religion?

X. The Election of 1800

Meanwhile, the Sedition and Alien Acts expired in 1800 and 1801. They had been relatively ineffective at suppressing dissent. On the contrary, they were much more important for the loud reactions they had inspired. They had helped many Americans decide what they didn’t want from their national government.

By 1800, therefore, President Adams had lost the confidence of many Americans. They had let him know it. In 1798, for instance, he had issued a national thanksgiving proclamation. Instead of enjoying a day of celebration and thankfulness, Adams and his family had been forced by rioters to flee the capital city of Philadelphia until the day was over. Conversely, his prickly independence had also put him at odds with Alexander Hamilton, the leader of his own party, who offered him little support. After four years in office, Adams found himself widely reviled.

In the election of 1800, therefore, the Republicans defeated Adams in a bitter and complicated presidential race. During the election, one Federalist newspaper article predicted that a Republican victory would fill America with “murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest.” A Republican newspaper, on the other hand, flung sexual slurs against President
Adams, saying he had “neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman.” Both sides predicted disaster and possibly war if the other should win.

In the end, the contest came down to a tie between two Republicans, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia and Aaron Burr of New York, who each had 73 electoral votes. (Adams had 65.) Burr was supposed to be a candidate for vice president, not president, but under the Constitution’s original rules, a tie-breaking vote had to take place in the House of Representatives. It was controlled by Federalists bitter at Jefferson. House members voted dozens of times without breaking the tie. On the thirty-sixth ballot, Thomas Jefferson emerged victorious.

Republicans believed they had saved the United States from grave danger. An assembly of Republicans in New York City called the election a “bloodless revolution.” They thought of their victory as a revolution in part because the Constitution (and eighteenth-century political theory) made no provision for political parties. The Republicans thought they were fighting to rescue the country from an aristocratic takeover, not just taking part in a normal constitutional process.

In his first inaugural address, however, Thomas Jefferson offered an olive branch to the Federalists. He pledged to follow the will of the American majority, whom he believed were Republicans, but to respect the rights of the Federalist minority. And his election set an important precedent. Adams accepted his electoral defeat and left the White House peacefully. “The revolution of 1800,” Jefferson would write years later, did for American principles what the Revolution of 1776 had done for its structure. But this time, the revolution was accomplished not “by the sword” but “by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage of the people.” Four years later, when the Twelfth Amendment changed the rules for presidential elections to prevent future deadlocks, it was designed to accommodate the way political parties worked.

Despite Adams’s and Jefferson’s attempts to tame party politics, though, the tension between federal
power and the liberties of states and individuals would exist long into the nineteenth century. And while Jefferson’s administration attempted to decrease federal influence, Chief Justice John Marshall, an Adams appointee, worked to increase the authority of the Supreme Court. These competing agendas clashed most famously in the 1803 case of Marbury v. Madison, which Marshall used to establish a major precedent.

The Marbury case seemed insignificant at first. The night before leaving office in early 1801, Adams had appointed several men to serve as justices of the peace in Washington, D.C. By making these “midnight appointments,” Adams had sought to put Federalists into vacant positions at the last minute. Upon taking office, however, Jefferson and his secretary of state, James Madison, had refused to deliver the federal commissions to the men Adams had appointed. Several of the appointees, including William Marbury, sued the government, and the case was argued before the Supreme Court.

Marshall used Marbury’s case to make a clever ruling. On the issue of the commissions, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Jefferson administration. But Chief Justice Marshall went further in his decision, ruling that the Supreme Court reserved the right to decide whether an act of Congress violated the Constitution. In other words, the court assumed the power of judicial review. This was a major (and lasting) blow to the Republican agenda, especially after 1810, when the Supreme Court extended judicial review to state laws. Jefferson was particularly frustrated by the decision, arguing that the power of judicial review “would make the Judiciary a despotic branch.”

XI. Conclusion

A grand debate over political power engulfed the young United States. The Constitution ensured that there would be a strong federal government capable of taxing, waging war, and making law, but it could never resolve the young nation’s many conflicting constituencies. The Whiskey Rebellion proved that the nation could stifle internal dissent but exposed a new threat to liberty. Hamilton’s banking system provided the nation with credit but also constrained frontier farmers. The Constitution’s guarantee of religious liberty conflicted with many popular prerogatives. Dissension only deepened, and as the 1790s progressed, Americans became bitterly divided over political parties and foreign wars.
During the ratification debates, Alexander Hamilton had written of the wonders of the Constitution. “A nation, without a national government,” he wrote, would be “an awful spectacle.” But, he added, “the establishment of a Constitution, in time of profound peace, by the voluntary consent of a whole people, is a prodigy,” a miracle that should be witnessed “with trembling anxiety.” Anti-Federalists had grave concerns about the Constitution, but even they could celebrate the idea of national unity. By 1795, even the staunchest critics would have grudgingly agreed with Hamilton’s convictions about the Constitution. Yet these same individuals could also take the cautions in Washington’s 1796 farewell address to heart. “There is an opinion,” Washington wrote, “that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty.” This, he conceded, was probably true, but in a republic, he said, the danger was not too little partisanship, but too much. “A fire not to be quenched,” Washington warned, “it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.”

For every parade, thanksgiving proclamation, or grand procession honoring the unity of the nation, there was also some political controversy reminding American citizens of how fragile their union was. And as party differences and regional quarrels tested the federal government, the new nation increasingly explored the limits of its democracy.

Content provided by The American Yawp
I. Introduction

Thomas Jefferson’s electoral victory over John Adams—and the larger victory of the Republicans over the Federalists—was but one of many changes in the early republic. Some, like Jefferson’s victory, were accomplished peacefully, and others violently, but in some form all Americans were involved. The wealthy and the powerful, middling and poor whites, Native Americans, free and enslaved African Americans, influential and poor women: all demanded a voice in the new nation that Thomas Paine called an “asylum” for liberty. They would all, in their own way, lay claim to the ideals of freedom and equality heralded, if not fully realized, by the Revolution.

II. Free and Enslaved Black Americans and the Challenge to Slavery

Led by the slave Gabriel, close to one thousand slaves planned to attack Richmond in late August 1800 and end slavery in Virginia. Some of the conspirators would set diversionary fires in the city’s warehouse district. Others would attack Richmond’s white residents, seize weapons, and capture Virginia Governor James Monroe. On August 30th, two enslaved men revealed the plot to their master who notified authorities. Faced with bad weather, Gabriel and other leaders postponed the attack until the next night, giving Governor Monroe and the militia time to capture the conspirators. After briefly escaping, Gabriel...
was seized, tried, and hanged along with twenty-five others. Their executions sent the message that others would be punished if they challenged slavery. Subsequently, the Virginia government increased restrictions on free people of color.

Gabriel’s rebellion, as the plot came to be known, sent several messages to Virginia’s white residents. It suggested that enslaved blacks were capable of preparing and carrying out a sophisticated and violent revolution—undermining white supremacist assumptions about the inherent intellectual inferiority of blacks. Furthermore, it demonstrated that white efforts to suppress news of other slave revolts—especially the 1791 slave rebellion in Haiti—had failed. Not only did some literate slaves read accounts of the successful attack in Virginia’s newspapers, others heard about the rebellion firsthand after July 1793 when slave holding refugees from Haiti arrived in Virginia with their slaves.

The Haitian Revolt (1791-1804) inspired free and enslaved blacks, and terrified whites throughout the United States. Port cities in the United States were flooded with news and refugees. Free people of color embraced the revolution, understanding it as a call for full abolition and the rights of citizenship denied in the United States. Over the next several decades, black Americans continually looked to Haiti as an inspiration in their struggle for freedom. For example, in 1829 David Walker, a black abolitionist in Boston, wrote an *Appeal* that called for resistance to slavery and racism. Walker called Haiti the “glory of the blacks and terror of the tyrants” and said that Haitians, “according to their word, are bound to protect and comfort us.” Haiti also proved that, given equal opportunities, people of color could achieve as much as whites. In 1826 the third college graduate of color in the United States, John Russwurm, gave a commencement address at Bowdoin College, noting that, “Haytiens have adopted the republican form of government…[and] in no country are the rights and privileges of citizens and foreigners more respected, and crimes less frequent.” In 1838 the *Colored American*, an early black newspaper, professed that, “No one who reads, with an unprejudiced mind, the history of Hayti…can doubt the capacity of colored men, nor the propriety of removing all their disabilities.” Haiti, and the activism it inspired, sent the message that enslaved and free blacks could not be omitted from conversations about the meaning of liberty and equality. Their words and actions—on plantations, streets, and the printed page—left an indelible mark on early national political culture.

The black activism inspired by Haiti’s revolution was so powerful that anxious whites scrambled to use the violence of the Haitian revolt to reinforce pro-slavery, white supremacy by limiting the social and political lives of people of color. White publications mocked black Americans as buffoons, ridiculing calls for abolition and equal rights. The most (in)famous of these, the “Bobalition” broadsides, published in Boston in the 1810s, crudely caricatured African
Americans. Widely distributed materials like these became the basis for racist ideas that thrived in the nineteenth century. These tropes divided white citizens and black non-citizens. But such ridicule also implied that black Americans’ presence in the political conversation was significant enough to require it. The need to reinforce such an obvious difference between whiteness and blackness implied that the differences might not be so obvious after all.

Henry Moss, a slave in Virginia, became arguably the most famous black man of the day when white spots appeared on his body in 1792, turning him visibly white within three years. As his skin changed, Moss marketed himself as “a great curiosity” in Philadelphia and soon earned enough money to buy his freedom. He met the great scientists of the era—including Samuel Stanhope Smith and Dr. Benjamin Rush—who joyously deemed Moss to be living proof of their theory that “the Black Color (as it is called) of the Negroes is derived from the leprosy.” Something, somehow, was “curing” Moss of his blackness. And in that whitening body of slave-turned-patriot-turned-curiosity, many Americans fostered ideas of race that would cause major problems in the years ahead.

The first decades of the new American republic coincided with a radical shift in understandings of race. Politically and culturally, Enlightenment thinking fostered beliefs in common humanity, the possibility of societal progress, the remaking of oneself, and the importance of one’s social and ecological environment—a four-pronged revolt against the hierarchies of the Old World. Yet a tension arose due to Enlightenment thinkers’ desire to classify and order the natural world. As Carolus Linnaeus, Comte de Buffon, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and others created connections between race and place as they divided the racial “types” of the world according to skin color, cranial measurements, and hair. They claimed that years under the hot sun and tropical climate of Africa darkened the skin and reconfigured the skulls of the African race, whereas the cold northern latitudes of Europe molded and sustained the “Caucasian” race. The environments endowed both races with respective characteristics, which accounted for differences in humankind tracing back to a common ancestry. A universal human
nature, therefore, housed not fundamental differences, but rather the “civilized” and the “primitive”—two poles on a scale of social progress.

Informed by European anthropology and republican optimism, Americans confronted their own uniquely problematic racial landscape. In 1787, Samuel Stanhope Smith published his treatise *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, which further articulated the theory of racial change and suggested that improving the social environment would tap into the innate equality of humankind and dramatically uplift the nonwhite races. The proper society, he and others believed, could gradually “whiten” men the way nature spontaneously chose to whiten Henry Moss. Thomas Jefferson disagreed. While Jefferson thought Native Americans could improve and become “civilized,” he declared in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784) that blacks were incapable of mental improvement and that they might even have a separate ancestry—a theory known as polygenesis, or multiple creations. His belief in polygenesis was less to justify slavery—slaveholders universally rejected the theory as antibiblical and thus a threat to their primary instrument of justification, the Bible—and more to justify schemes for a white America, such as the plan to gradually send freed slaves to Africa. Many Americans believed nature had made the white and black races too different to peacefully coexist, and they viewed African colonization as the solution to America’s racial problem.

Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* sparked considerable backlash from antislavery and black communities. The celebrated black surveyor Benjamin Banneker, for example, immediately wrote to Jefferson and demanded he “eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas” and instead embrace the belief that we are “all of one flesh” and with “all the same sensations and endowed...with the same faculties.” Many years later, in his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), David Walker channeled decades of black protest, simultaneously denouncing the moral rot of slavery and racism while praising the inner strength of the race.

Jefferson had his defenders. Men such as Charles Caldwell and Samuel George Morton hardened Jefferson’s skepticism with the “biological” case for blacks and whites not only having separate creations, but actually being different species—a position increasingly articulated throughout the antebellum period. Few Americans subscribed wholesale to such theories, but many shared beliefs in white supremacy. As the decades passed, white Americans were forced to acknowledge that if the black population was indeed whitening, it resulted from interracial sex and not the environment. The sense of inspiration and wonder that followed Henry Moss in the 1790s would have been impossible just a generation later.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
## Early Republic Timeline: 1788 - 1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>• First federal elections held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>• Alexander Hamilton’s <em>Report on Public Credit</em> issued to Congress, which then approved Hamilton’s plan to tackle the national debt and build credit. Capital moved from New York City to Philadelphia, while compromise made to eventually move the capital to what became Washington D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>• Great Britain and France went to war in Europe. Washington announced the Neutrality Proclamation toward that war. Citizen Genet stirred anti-administration sentiment (backfired). British seized American ships. Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. Supreme Court ruling on <em>Chisholm v. Georgia</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>• Whiskey Rebellion occurred. Battle of Fallen Timbers happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>• Treaty of Greenville signed. Jay’s Treaty approved by Congress. Pinckney’s Treaty signed with Spain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>• Federalist, John Adams elected president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797 - 1798</td>
<td>• French ships seized American vessels on the high seas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797 - 1798</td>
<td>• XYZ Affair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>• Democratic-Republican, Thomas Jefferson elected president.</td>
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The Election of 1800
(Revolution of 1800)

- Major issues in the election: undeclared naval war with France, Alien and Sedition Acts
- Major players in the election: John Adams (incumbent), Thomas Jefferson (Democratic-Republican’s presidential candidate), Aaron Burr (Democratic-Republican’s vice-presidential candidate)
- Major dynamics of the election: Due to weaknesses in the Constitution, as previously mentioned, there was a tie between Burr and Jefferson for the presidency. A disputed election, as per the Constitution, went into the House of Representatives, and by February 1801 on the 36th ballot (!!!), Jefferson finally won the office.
- Major results of the election: a) Congress passed and the states ratified the 12th Amendment of the Constitution, which required that the president and vice-president be elected on separate ballots. b) The “Virginia Dynasty” started, as from Jefferson through Monroe, the presidents were from Virginia. c) And, the nation lucked out in NOT having Aaron Burr as president (read on to find out why)!

Jefferson’s Vision for America
As a review, Jefferson wanted the nation to be an agrarian republic, where yeoman farmers dominated. He rejected the idea of large scale urbanization and industrialization, due to the “evils” associated with it, such as overpopulation. He favored a free market economy, in which the laws of supply and demand determined the costs of goods. He favored free trade policies. He felt that the primary problems facing the nation at the time were a high population density and money concentrated in the hands of the few (the latter point was ironic given his own wealth).

Non-Whites in Jefferson’s Republic
Jefferson was a man of his time. As a southern aristocrat with a lifestyle maintained via the system of slavery, Jefferson became a defender of the institution, despite earlier attitudes regarding the ills of the practice. Jefferson can be used by students to examine common attitudes toward slaves, as well as Native Americans, at the time.

His agrarian ideal was “Whites Only.” In 1781, he wrote the “Notes of the State of Virginia” in which he argued that blacks were, “inferior to whites in the endowments of both body and mind.” When presented with direct evidence of superior African-
American intellectual achievements, he refused to accept that blacks had the same abilities as whites. In response to the poetry of Phyllis Wheatley, he dismissively said that “the compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism.” Of Benjamin Banneker’s scholarly accomplishments, he said that these were an example of “man’s moral eminence” versus Banneker’s own intellectual equality.

Native Americans (Nishnabi) were viewed differently than blacks, but Jefferson still saw them as inferior. He considered them savages, but he was not convinced that they were biologically inferior to whites. Instead he saw their cultural immaturity and need to be “civilized” by whites (acculturated). He felt for many Indians that this would not be possible, and thus they would have to be removed westward, away from the white populations. Jefferson was paternalistic and viewed the Native Americans as poor, simple-minded, children, and -as children- they could not be trusted with the rights of full-citizenship. Note: the Constitution said nothing about the status of Native Americans, despite the fact that a number of the ideas in the Constitution were borrowed from the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. The Senate drafted and ratified treaties with the Indians and the Army enforced them. This led to irregular practices and inconsistent policies (especially with treaties) of the federal government in its dealings with the Nishnabi.

Jefferson’s Administration

What were his objectives? He wanted to end the Alien and Sedition Acts, reduce the size and power of the federal government, and keep international peace.

- The Alien and Sedition Acts ended easily, since they simply expired in 1801.
- Jefferson kept Hamilton’s economic policies, because they were working to pull the nation out of debt.
- He reduced the size of the federal government via frugal management. Specifically, he lowered the budget from $87 million/year to $57 million/year.
- He raised revenue via tariffs and land sales, versus domestic taxes.
- He decreased the size of the army, and especially the navy, by reducing the number of officers and enlisted men from 4,000 to 2,500 by the time he left office.
- With that, in March 1802, he signed a bill to create West Point for the purpose of training leaders of the state militia. Jefferson wanted the nation to use a well-trained militia system, in times of need. Opponents of Jefferson sharply criticize West Point for being wasteful of money and for being an wealthy man’s son’s institution. Several attempts were made to close the school between the years of Jefferson’s administration and the Mexican-Ameri-
Jefferson’s War on the Judicial Branch

Jefferson wanted to oust the judges appointed by John Adams near the end of his administration, per a Federalist-proposed law intended to maintain a degree of federal control via the judicial branch. The bill added circuit court judges, district judges, and had a provision requiring presidents to institute and keep these judicial appointments. Jefferson was angered by this act, as it ensured a long-term federalist presence in the judiciary, because justices were appointed for life (unless impeached and convicted). Additionally, Federalists warned that if the appointments were unfilled or the positions repealed, it would be considered a violation of these justices’ rights.

When Jefferson refused Justice William Marbury his job as a federal justice in Washington D.C. (see textbook account), it led to the famous case called, Marbury v. Madison. The chief justice of the Supreme Court was Federalist John Marshall. He ruled that the law requiring Jefferson’s administration to place Marbury was unconstitutional. By ruling as such, Madison in effect ruled on the constitutionality of the law. (This set the precedent of Judicial Review, where by the Supreme Court reviews and rules on the constitutionality of laws passed by the states and Congress.). Although it seemed that Marshall betrayed his Federalist ideology, in fact he did not. By sacrificing Marbury, Marshall strengthened the powers of the federal government, specifically the judicial branch. NOTE: Some judges were impeached as a result of the ruling, but these cases were not significant, nationally.

The War in the Mediterranean

Jefferson reduced the size of the Navy. However, the United States needed some naval power. For years, the U.S. traded with African nations. Off of what was known as the Barbary Coast, pirates attacked U.S. vessels. The U.S. paid these pirates bribes to leave U.S. ships alone. With his budget cuts, Jefferson ceased paying the bribes. With that move, the pirates resumed their attacks. As Commander-in-Chief of the military, Jefferson utilized the navy to fight the pirates from 1801-1805, in which year a peace was negotiated. In this treaty, the U.S. paid the pirates $60,000 for the release of Americans captured in the fighting, while the pirates agreed to stop raiding American ships. Despite the navy’s lack of development, it was found useful, even by Jefferson.

The Louisiana Purchase

• **BACKGROUND:** Pinckney’s Treaty of 1795, signed between the U.S. and Spain, gave the U.S. much desired navigation rights on the Mississippi River. (Spain controlled the mouth of the river and thus, according to international law, controlled the river itself.) However, when Spain sold the Louisiana Territory to
France, the treaty no longer applied. France (under Napoleon) wanted the territory as a ‘bread basket’ colony to supply food stuffs to French colonists in the West Indies. Their need for the territory, though, ended when one Toussaint L’Ouverture (a slave on the island of Santo Domingo) led a slave revolt in 1803 that ultimately resulted in the overthrow of French colonial control of the island and the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804.

With the loss of his prime West Indian colony, Napoleon opened to the idea of selling the Louisiana Territory.

- **THE PURCHASE:** American foreign ministers intended to offer $10 million for the purchase of New Orleans alone, but upon arrival they found Napoleon interested in selling the whole territory for $15 million. The ministers acted quickly, as Napoleon was prone to changing his mind. In April 1803, the U.S. signed a treaty with France for the land.

- **DOUBTS:** When Jefferson heard of Napoleon’s offer, he was thrilled with the prospect of doubling the size of the nation. However, the circumstances challenged his strict-constructionist views, as the Constitution did not explicitly state that the federal government could buy land. Jefferson struggled with his ideological dilemma, until he conceived of the idea to purchase the land via treaty, which complied constitutionally with the president’s treaty making powers.

- **RESULTS:** The results of the Louisiana Purchase were far-reaching. It was the greatest land deal in history. The U.S. got 825,000 square miles of land for 4 cents per acre. Jefferson’s administration commissioned a team to explore the land in 1803 (Lewis and Clark) in order to learn more about it. Jefferson, as a man of the Enlightenment, was interested in the scientific as well as monetary value of the land. In May of 1804, Lewis and Clark set out on their expedition with about 45 men. They were accompanied by Sacajawea, a Native American woman, from around modern-day North Dakota. She guided them though much of the territory, negotiated with other tribes, and helped the team survive. And, she did so with an infant on her back. After the team returned, she assisted with the creation of a territorial map in 1807. From this expedition, others followed.

**Westward Expansion**

With the opening of the Louisiana Purchase Territory, whites were anxious to move westward. The population of the East “exploded” by 1810. For example, the population of Ohio went from 45,000 in 1800 to over 231,000 by 1810! Life in the West was not easy. It was a difficult journey westward, due to poor transportation and roads. Although land was relatively inexpensive, the cost of setting up a homestead and farm was not. Frontier governments were weak, and the fact that whites were moving onto Native Amer-
American lands resulted in unstable relations between the whites and Nishnabi of the region.

With expansion westward, settlers were cut off from life in the East temporarily. For awhile, the West developed as a self-contained area in terms of economy, trade, and culture. Whites moved westward in droves, primarily in a parallel manner (i.e. migrants from the North settled in what was then the Northwest, while migrants from the South settled in what was then the Southwest). New migrants were key to keeping the regional economy going. Over time, as transportation and communication technologies united East and West (especially in the northern regions), the West depended on eastern markets for the sale of their goods. This fact resulted in the West being impacted by the forces of sectionalism, also splitting along North-South lines.

Problems with Aaron Burr - Some Important Precedents

As the nation expanded across the continent, some people feared that the country was becoming too big. One such group of people was the Federalists. A dying party at the national level, they were concerned that they would lose support, since most of the people settling in the West were Democratic-Republican, small farmers. Industrial New England was the seat of the remaining Federalist power-base. Radicals within the party suggested that New England secede from the Union. The Essex Junto intended to form a separate northern confederacy comprised of: New Foundland, New England, New Jersey, and New York. The plan was to elect a Federalist governor to New York, who would initiate New York’s secession and then the region’s. Initially, the Essex Junto approached Alexander Hamilton (a New Yorker) to run for that office. Hamilton rejected the plan, deeming it treasonous and insane.

However, fellow New Yorker, Aaron Burr, was another matter. Having tied Jefferson for the position of president (and ultimately getting the vice-presidency), Burr was not a loyal Democratic-Republican. He was egotistical, power-hungry, and as some historians argue, mentally unstable enough to do it. Ultimately the plans of the Essex Junto failed, because Burr did not win the election in New York.

The Importance of this scenario was twofold. First, although the Essex Junto represented only a minority voice within the Federalist party, their reasons for leaving the Union were sectionally-based. They argued that during the years of the “Virginia Dynasty” presidential administrations made anti-northern policies designed to hurt the North’s industrial economy. Thus, they felt secession was justified. Second, during the intrigues of the situation, Hamilton insulted Aaron Burr’s character and was killed by Burr in a duel (1804). Dueling (an odd, aristocratic practice left over from Europe) was increasingly unpopular, especially in the North, at the time of Hamilton’s death. The states of New York and
New Jersey indicted Burr for murder. Burr fled to Spanish, Florida until the charges were dropped. He returned to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1804. Take a moment to fathom this concept. The vice-president of the U.S. KILLED the leader of the opposition party! Needless to say Jefferson was not pleased with Burr, and what Burr did next did not help his standing.

After the landslide victory of Jefferson over Federalist, Thomas Pickney, in 1804, Burr concocted another scheme. This time he intended to lead a western insurrection, by creating an empire of his own out of New Orleans and Mexico. Someone betrayed his plan to authorities, who arrested and tried Burr (in Marshall’s court) for treason. Jefferson wanted Burr convicted no matter what. But, according to the Constitution, at least two witnesses had to testify against a person when accused of treason. In Burr’s case, a second witness did not come forward. Thus, Burr was acquitted. The significance of this case was that in upholding the law regarding treason, the possibility of administrations randomly using treason charges against political opponents was reduced.

The Coming of the War of 1812

Jefferson-Administration Background:
Jefferson’s second administration did not go peacefully. The war between Britain and France restarted, compromising U.S. neutral shipping on the high seas. Both countries interfered with U.S. vessels, and the British continued to impress Americans. By 1811 over 11,000 Americans were impressed into the British Navy.

Tensions increased with the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair of 1807, when the British vessel Leopard attacked the U.S. Chesapeake. Three Americans were killed, 18 were wounded, and several were impressed. Congress was not in session at the time of the attack, so war did not result. In response, Jefferson’s administration: expelled British warships and the British minister, sent a minister to Great Britain to negotiate for an apology and reparations (& got them), and put forward the Embargo Act of 1807. The embargo prohibited U.S. citizens from trading with ALL other countries of the world. Americans could only trade with Americans. The idea was to punish Europeans, especially Britain, by withholding lucrative U.S. trade. The results were the opposite of what Jefferson intended. Although the British textile industry felt the pinch of not having American cotton, the U.S. export economy suffered the most. In 1807, the U.S. revenue was $108 million in exports, by 1808 it was $22 million. What section of the country hurt the most? ... Right! New England.

This fact turned New England merchants and old Federalists against Jefferson’s administration. They argued that the embargo was a deliberate attempt by Jefferson to hurt New England commerce, and they demanded that the embargo be repealed. However, over time the embargo hurt plantation owners and western farmers too, and thus after 15 months, the
government repealed and replaced it with the Non-Intercourse Act of 1809, banning trade only with France and Britain. BUT, an unintentional (sectionalism-related) side-effect of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts was that, without British and other European industrial imports, the U.S. developed its own manufacturing base to meet the demand for goods! It gave U.S. industry a jump-start. This was a very Hamiltonian result to a Jeffersonian move.

Madison-Administration Background:
After James Madison became president in 1808, avoiding war with Great Britain was the country’s main challenge. All government efforts to stave off war failed. Increasingly, the average American became “war-hungry.” And, basically, there were three underlining causes of The War of 1812.

1. British-Nishnabi Connections: Since the Revolutionary War Americans suspected and believed that the British encouraged Nishnabi attacks on American settlements. British reluctance to pull out of the old Northwest Territory signified to Americans that the British hoped to retain those lands and intended to thwart the settlement there via the Indian raids. In American eyes, the Battle of Tippecanoe was a supporting example. Indian Chief, Tecumseh, formed a confederacy of tribes in order to stop westward expansion. He wanted to form a separate Nishnabi nation, unified against American aggressions. With his brother, he established headquarters on the Tippecanoe Creek in the Indiana territory and recruited other tribes. This news reached the white settlers, and many believed that the British encouraged and supplied Tecumseh’s efforts. William Henry Harrison, then governor of the Indiana Territory, felt that the Indians in the West needed to be destroyed because they stood in the way of “civilization.” Acting in the name of the federal government, Harrison attacked Tecumseh’s headquarters, while the chief was away, and effectively ended Tecumseh’s plans. For so doing, Harrison was revered as a military hero, and he became president in 1840. The results of Tippecanoe were that Americans became convinced that the British were behind Tecumseh’s plans. Americans felt British Canada should be invaded and conquered in order to drive the British out, annex Canadian lands, and end opposition to American westward expansion.

2. The Desire for More Land: Lands in the East were deplete of nutrients, and people did not want to go west of the Mississippi because of the journey & harsh realities of pioneering. Therefore, Americans turned their eyes northward to southern British Canada (Ontario in particular) for already farmable lands. Thus, in the North and Northwest, people wanted to war with Britain in order to obtain British land.
3. National Pride: As mentioned before, the U.S. felt insulted by British impressment of Americans on the high seas.

By the spring of 1812 tensions mounted and public opinion increased to the point where Madison could no longer avoid asking for a declaration of war from Congress. In June of 1812 the U.S. declared war against Great Britain.

Read your text for the details of the War of 1812.

The Election of 1816 & The Era of Cultural Nationalism

Following the war another member of the “Virginia Dynasty,” James Monroe, became president. Monroe had been the Secretary of State under Madison. During Monroe’s administration, the nation tried to gain a sense of identity, unity, and harmony, while also considering its role on the global scene. The phenomenon of “cultural nationalism” dominated the era, but it was another umbrella experience. Sectionalism did not die out. *In fact, it was just about to heat up like never before, due to Missouri applying for statehood!*

Americans viewed the War of 1812 as their second war for independence. After the war, Americans searched for their own sense of unique identity apart from Europe, especially Great Britain. The Revolutionary War gave Americans political independence, but the War of 1812 gave Americans a sense of cultural/economic independence. For this reason, despite lingering national problems, Monroe’s administration often has been labeled the “Era of Good Feelings.” There were many ways in which Americans expressed their identity:

- Authors such as Thomas Paine, Noah Webster, Jediah Morse, and Mason Weems, wrote for and to American audiences and literally changed the way Americans viewed their country. Paine encouraged Americans to break cultural ties from Europe and even establish a national university to train Americans for government service. Webster changed the language to “American” English with his Blue Book Speller and Dictionary. Morse the importance of studying American history. (By 1827 New England states had made the subject of American History mandatory in high schools). Weems wrote about Washington’s life, exaggerating him into a bigger-than-life character who surpassed others in morality and strength (a.k.a. the lies told in the cherry tree and Potomac River stories).

- Artists painted American landscapes, leaders, persons, and themes

- Artists painted American landscapes, leaders, persons, and themes

- Leaders felt a national bank was needed to keep the American economy strong, so the Second National Bank was chartered for 20
years (1816-1836) with a $35 million investment. Congress compromised over the sectional debates regarding another bank. But, the bank re-emerged in the Jacksonian Era as a key topic of sectional debates.

- Americans embraced the expansionist spirit. The U.S. acquired Florida through the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819. But, Americans also wanted to expand west. Americans believed that they had the God given right and obligation to spread westward and to dominate the continent from Atlantic to Pacific.

- The government issued the British-backed Monroe Doctrine (see text for more information) in December of 1823. John Q. Adams wrote the doctrine, but Monroe announced it in a speech to Congress.

- The Second Great Awakening created new American denominations and religious groups. Revivalism and religion made a “come back” in the U.S. around 1801 and spread rapidly through the nation, impacting the western regions the most. Camp meetings and revivals were loud and emotional, with singing, weeping, shouting, and shaking. Women actively participated in the movement, expanding their “sphere of influence” outside of the home into religious leadership roles and reform efforts. New denominations arose, while older ones declined. For example, the Methodists, Baptists, Mormons, African Methodist Episcopal, Catholics (because of an increase in immigration), and utopian sects gained membership. The Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians lost members. The message of the Second Great Awakening was for the average person to repent against sin, accept salvation, and to get God into their daily lives. Like the first, the Second Great Awakening was a culturally unifying experience of the era. All classes, sections, ethnicities, and races were impacted. Blacks such as Gabriel Prosser and his brother led revivals, and around 1800 in Virginia they also plotted a slave revolt. Revivalism led to greater racial unrest in the South, because whites did not want blacks gathering for worship, being taught to read the Bible, or hearing the egalitarian message of Christianity.

The Missouri Compromise

This event was critically important in terms of sectionalism. You need to understand it and the precedents that shaped it in order to master key aspects of sectionalism for the rest of the semester.

The background to understanding the Missouri Compromise started with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the statehood process, and precedents regarding Congress’ authority to make decisions concerning the territories. The event that triggered the need for the compromise was the Missouri Territory 1817
application for statehood as a slave-labor state. At the time, there were 10,000 people enslaved out of the 70,000 in the territory. However, prior to this in 1811, Alabama had entered the union as a slave-labor state. This created a balance between the number of free (12) and the number of slave-labor (12) states, nationally. Missouri entering the union with a slave-based economy would throw off that balance, and Northerners did not want to see this happen.

Why did maintaining the balance matter? First, the three-fifths clause of the Constitution allowed slaves to count as a portion of the population used to determine the number of representatives in the House, giving more voice to the South’s agendas, politically. In the Senate, it would mean another two pro-slavery Senators, also giving more voice to the Southern vision for America. This meant that when Northerners (with a Hamiltonian, free-labor perspective) pushed for national legislation favoring their agendas that such bills would be harder to reach compromises on and pass. Thus, more slave-labor states meant that the likelihood of the Northern vision for America would not advance. The same, of course, would apply if the sectional balance were reversed in favor of the North.

To limit this, Northerners relied on the precedent set in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 of Congress determining the status of slave labor (made illegal) in the Old Northwest. Arguing that it was Congress’ jurisdiction to determine the status of slave labor in a territory, the Tallmadge Amendment was attached to the Missouri Statehood Bill. This called for the gradual emancipation of slaves in Missouri, once it became a state. Slaves would be freed after age twenty-five, and no further importation of slaves would be allowed. Southerners reacted strongly against the amendment, arguing that Congress could not ban Southerners from bringing slaves into the area, because slaves were property and the Constitution protected the right to property. Intense debates resulted in Congress, which called the issue of slave versus free labor to the nation’s attention.

While Congress was debating the status of Missouri, in 1819, Maine applied to become a free-labor state in the Union. At this juncture, the compromise elements within Congress felt they could fashion a solution. Henry Clay of Kentucky led the charge, proposing the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The solution that was offered was simple: Maine would enter the Union as a free-labor state, while Missouri would enter as a slave-labor one (the Tallmadge Amendment was dropped). And, to prevent future conflicts over the expansion of slave versus free labor, a line would be drawn following the 36 degree 30 minute latitude line on the map. Above that line, no slave labor would be allowed, making it free territory; below the line, the option of slave-labor remained (Arkansas Territory).

The consequences of Missouri Compromise were very important sectionally. For the time, it settled the question over slave versus free labor in the territories.
UNIT 5
JEFFERSONIAN ERA

But, it also made the question a national political issue that polarized the country. The Northern states became more entrenched in opposing the expansion of slave-labor in the territories (aka, anti-slavery views), due to the economic and political competition from such states to both individuals who wanted to settle in the West as well as to their national agenda in Congress. Northerners also tended to be anti-slavery due to racism; whites did not want to live in regions with high black populations. The South alternately started to more vehemently defend the institution of slavery economically and politically, arguing from the position of the right to property. The sectional debate primarily focused on whether or not Congress could in fact limit property rights in the territories. Most in the North argued “yes,” while Southerners argued “no.” As time went on, more frequent debates over strengths and weaknesses of the two economic systems (North and South) also entered the mix. Another result of the Missouri Compromise was that abolitionism increased to a degree in the North, though those favoring abolishing slavery nationally remained a small minority. In contrast, a growing number of Southern “fire-eaters” took to defending the institution of slavery as a necessary good versus a necessary evil, as had been argued earlier back in the Colonial Era. The Missouri Crisis and Compromise was an issue birthed in sectionalism that then further promoted the sectional divide by creating a greater awareness of the economic and political divisions between the sections in the public’s mind.

A VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:

Many of the sources will talk about “slave” versus “free” states, or the issue of “slavery.” In doing so, they are assuming that you understand that the issue was about the two competing economic systems of the North & South, in relationship to western expansion. So, in reality, even though sources take short cuts with language, the best way to express for you to talk about the issue to show a real understanding of the sectional dynamics at work is to use the phrases “free-labor states” versus “slave-labor states” in your writings and discussions for this class.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
Free and enslaved black Americans were not the only ones pushing against political hierarchies. Jefferson’s election to the presidency in 1800 represented a victory for ordinary white Americans in their bid to assume more direct control over the government. Elites had made no secret of their hostility toward pure democracy, that is the direct control of government by the people. In both private correspondence and published works, many of the nation’s founders argued that pure democracy would lead to anarchy. Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames spoke for many of his colleagues when he lamented the dangers that democracy posed because it depended upon public opinion, which “shifts with every current of caprice.” Jefferson’s election, for Federalists like Ames, heralded a slide “down into the mire of a democracy.”

Indeed, many political leaders and non-elite citizens believed Jefferson embraced the politics of the masses. “[I]n a government like ours it is the duty of the Chief-magistrate…to unite in himself the confidence of the whole people,” Jefferson wrote in 1810. Nine years later, looking back on his monumental election, Jefferson again linked his triumph to the political engagement of ordinary citizens: “The revolution of 1800…was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 76 was in its form,” he wrote, “not effected indeed by the sword…but by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage [voting] of the people.” Jefferson desired to convince Americans—and the world—that a government that answered directly to the people would lead to lasting national union, not anarchic division, proving that free people could govern themselves democratically.

Jefferson set out to differentiate his administration from the Federalists. He defined American union by the voluntary bonds of fellow citizens toward one another and toward the government. In contrast, the Federalists supposedly imaged a union defined by expansive state power and public submission to the rule of aristocratic elites. For Jefferson, the American nation drew its “energy” and its strength from the “confidence” of a “reasonable” and “rational” people.

Republican celebrations often credited Jefferson with saving the nation’s republican principles. In a move that enraged Federalists, they used the image of George Washington, who had passed away in 1799, linking the republican virtue Washington epitomized to the democratic liberty Jefferson championed. Leaving behind the military pomp of power-obsessed Federalists, Republicans had peacefully elected the scribe of national independence, the philosopher-patriot who had battled tyranny with his pen, not with a sword or a gun.

The celebrations of Jefferson’s presidency and the defeat of the Federalists expressed many citizens’
willingness to assert greater direct control over the government as citizens. The definition of citizenship was changing. Early American national identity was coded masculine, just as it was coded white and wealthy; yet, since the Revolution, women had repeatedly called for a place in the conversation. Mercy Otis Warren was one of the most noteworthy female contributors to the public ratification debate over the Constitution of 1787 and 1788, but women all over the country were urged to participate in the discussion over the Constitution. “It is the duty of the American ladies, in a particular manner, to interest themselves in the success of the measures that are now pursuing by the Federal Convention for the happiness of America,” a Philadelphia essayist announced. “They can retain their rank as rational beings only in a free government. In a monarchy… they will be considered as valuable members of a society, only in proportion as they are capable of being mothers for soldiers, who are the pillars of crowned heads.” American women were more than mothers to soldiers; they were mothers to liberty.

Historians have used the term Republican Motherhood to describe the early American belief that women were essential in nurturing the principles of liberty in the citizenry. Women would pass along important values of independence and virtue to their children, ensuring that each generation cherished the same values of the American Revolution. Because of these ideas, women’s actions became politicized. Republican partisans even described women’s choice of sexual partner a crucial to the health and well-being of both the party and the nation. “The fair Daughters of America” should “never disgrace themselves by giving their hands in marriage to any but real republicans,” a group of New Jersey Republicans asserted. A Philadelphia paper toasted “The fair Daughters of Columbia. May their smiles be the reward of Republicans only.” Though unmistakably steeped in the gendered assumptions about female sexuality and domesticity that denied women an equal share of the political rights men enjoyed, these statements also conceded the pivotal role women played as active participants in partisan politics.

IV. Jefferson as President

Buttressed by robust public support, Jefferson sought to implement policies that reflected this rhetoric and political activity. He worked to reduce taxes and cut the government’s budget believing that this would cause the economy to expand and prosper. His cuts included national defense and Jefferson restricted the regular army to three thousand men. England may have needed taxes and debt to support its military empire, but Jefferson was determined to live in peace—and that belief led him to successfully reduce America’s national debt while getting rid of all internal taxes during his first term. In a move that became the crowning achievement of his presidency, Jefferson authorized the acquisition of Louisiana from France in 1803 in what is considered the largest real estate deal in American history. During the massive reorga-
nization of North American property following the Seven Years’ War, France ceded Louisiana to Spain in exchange for West Florida. Jefferson was concerned about the American use of Spanish-held New Orleans, which served as an important port for western farmers. His worries multiplied when the French secretly reacquired Louisiana in 1800. Spain remained in Louisiana for two more years while U.S. Minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, tried to strike a compromise. Fortunately for the U.S., the pressures of war in Europe and the slave insurrection in Haiti forced Napoleon to rethink his vast North American holdings. Rebellious slaves coupled with a yellow fever outbreak in Haiti defeated French forces, stripping Napoleon of his ability to control Haiti (the home of his profitable sugar plantations). Deciding to cut his losses, Napoleon offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory for $15 million—roughly equivalent to $250 million today. Negotiations between Livingston and Napoleon’s foreign minister, Talleyrand, succeeded more spectacularly than either Jefferson or Livingston could have imagined.

Jefferson made an inquiry to his cabinet regarding the constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase, but he believed he was obliged to operate outside the strict limitations of the Constitution if the good of the nation was at stake as his ultimate responsibility was to the American people. Jefferson felt he should be able to “throw himself on the justice of his country” when he facilitated the interests of the very people he served. He believed that a strong executive was essential to a lasting republican nation.

Jefferson’s foreign policy, especially the Embargo of 1807, elicited the most outrage from his Federalist critics. As Napoleon Bonaparte’s armies moved across Europe, Jefferson wrote to a European friend that he was glad that God had “divided the dry lands of your hemisphere from the dry lands of ours, and said ‘here, at least, be there peace.’” Unfortunately, the Atlantic Ocean soon became the site of Jefferson’s greatest foreign policy test, as England, France, and Spain refused to respect American ships’ neutrality. The greatest offenses came from the British, who resumed the policy of impressment, seizing thousands of American sailors and forcing them to fight for the British navy.

Many Americans called for war when the British attacked the USS Chesapeake in 1807. The president,
however, decided on a policy of “peaceable coercion” and Congress agreed. Under the Embargo Act of 1807, American ports were closed to all foreign trade in hopes of avoiding war. Jefferson hoped that an embargo would force European nations to respect American neutrality. Historians disagree over the wisdom of peaceable coercion. At first, withholding commerce rather than declaring war appeared to be the ultimate means of nonviolent conflict resolution. In practice, the Embargo hurt America’s economy and Jefferson’s personal finances even suffered. When Americans resorted to smuggling their goods out of the country, Jefferson expanded governmental powers to try to enforce their compliance, leading some to label him a “Tyrant.”

Criticism of Jefferson’s policies began to use the same rhetoric that his supporters trumpeted. Federalists attacked the American Philosophical Society and the study of natural history, believing both to be too saturated with Democratic Republicans. Some Federalists lamented the alleged decline of educational standards for children. Moreover, James Callender published accusations (confirmed much later by DNA evidence) that Jefferson was involved in a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves. Callender referred to Jefferson as “our little mulatto president,” suggesting that sex with a slave had somehow compromised Jefferson’s racial integrity. Callender’s accusation joined previous Federalist attacks on Jefferson’s racial politics, including a scathing pamphlet written by South Carolinian William Loughton Smith in 1796 that described the principles of Jeffersonian democracy as the beginning of a slippery slope to dangerous racial equality.

Arguments lamenting the democratization of America were far less effective than those that borrowed from democratic language and demonstrated how Jefferson’s actions were, in fact, undermining the sovereignty of the people. Historian David Hackett Fischer has written that the Federalists set out to “defeat Jefferson with his own weapons.” As Alexander Hamilton argued in 1802: “[W]e must consider whether it be possible for us to succeed without in some degree employing the weapons which have been employed against us.” Indeed, when Federalists attacked Jefferson, they often accused him of acting against the interests of the very public he claimed to serve. This tactic represented a pivotal development. As the Federalists scrambled to stay politically relevant, it became apparent that their ideology—rooted in eigh-
teenth century notions of virtue, paternalistic rule by wealthy elite, and the deference of ordinary citizens to an aristocracy of merit—was no longer tenable. The Federalists’ adoption of republican political rhetoric signaled a new political landscape where both parties embraced the direct involvement of the citizenry. The Republican Party rose to power on the promise to expand voting and promote a more direct link between political leaders and the electorate. The American populace continued to demand more direct access to political power. Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe sought to expand voting through policies that made it easier for Americans to purchase land. Under their leadership, seven new states entered the Union. By 1824, only three states still had rules about how much property someone had to own before he could vote. Never again would the Federalists regain dominance over either the Congress or the presidency; the last Federalist to run for president, Rufus King, lost to Monroe in 1816.

V. Native American Power and the United States

The rhetoric of equality was far removed from the reality of inequality along gender, class, racial and ethnic lines that permeated Jeffersonian America, as the diplomatic relations between Native Americans and local, state, and national governments illustrates. Prior to the Revolution, many Indian nations had balanced a delicate diplomacy between European empires, which scholars have called the ‘Play-off System.’ Moreover, in many parts of North America, indigenous peoples dominated social relations.

While Americans pushed for land cessions in all their interactions with Native diplomats and leaders, cessions (and boundaries) were only one source of tension. Trade, criminal jurisdiction, roads, the sale of liquor, and alliances were also key negotiating points. Yet the diplomatic negotiations in Paris that ended the Revolutionary War, in which Native peoples fought on each side or struggled desperately to maintain neutrality, were strikingly absent of Native American negotiators. Unsurprisingly, the final document omitted concessions for Native allies. Even as Native peoples proved vital trading partners, scouts, and allies against hostile nations, they were often condemned by white settlers and government officials as “savages.” White ridicule of indigenous practices and disregard for indigenous nations’ property rights and sovereignty prompted some indigenous peoples to turn away from white practices.

In the wake of the American Revolution, Native American diplomats developed relationships with the United States, maintained or ceased relations with the British Empire (or with Spain in the South), and negotiated their relationship with other Native nations. Encounters between different peoples or neighbors could require informal diplomacy. Formal diplomatic negotiations included Native rituals to reestablish relationships and open communication at treaty conferences that took place in Native towns,
neutral sites in Indian-American borderlands, and in state and federal capitals. While chiefs were politically important, skilled orators, such as Red Jacket, intermediaries, and interpreters also played key roles in negotiations. Native American orators were known for metaphorical language, command of an audience, and compelling voice and gestures.

Throughout the early republic, diplomacy was the common recourse between Native nations and between Native peoples and the federal government. Violence and warfare carried enormous costs for all parties—in lives, money, trade disruptions, and reputation. Diplomacy allowed parties to air their grievances, negotiate their relationships, and minimize violence. Violent conflicts arose when diplomacy failed.

Native diplomacy testified to the complexity of indigenous cultures and their role in shaping the politics and policy of American communities, states, and the federal government. Yet white attitudes, words, and policies frequently relegated Native peoples to the literal and figurative margins as “ignorant savages.” At the same time, Euro-Americans heralded the natural wonders of North America as evidence of colonial superiority over Europe, even referring to themselves as “Native” to differentiate themselves from recent emigrants from Europe. History books depicted the North American continent as a vast, untamed wilderness, either portraying the Native peoples as hostile or simply omitting them completely. Poor treatment like this inspired hostility and calls for pan-Indian alliances from leaders of distinct Native nations, including the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.

Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa, the Prophet, helped envision an alliance of North America’s indigenous populations to halt the encroachments of the United States and the resulting conditions. They created pan-Indian towns in present-day Indiana, first at Greenville, then at Prophetstown, in defiance of the Treaty of Greenville (1795). Tecumseh traveled to many diverse Indian nations in places ranging from Canada to Georgia, calling for unification, resistance, and the restoration of sacred power.

Tecumseh’s and Tenskwatawa’s pan-Indian confederacy was the culmination of the many nativist and revitalization movements that swept indigenous North America during the eighteenth-century. An earlier coalition fought in Pontiac’s War. Neolin, the Delaware prophet, influenced Pontiac, an Ottawa (Odawa) war chief, with his vision of Native independence, cultural renewal, and religious revitalization. Through Neolin, the Master of Life—the Great Spirit—urged Native peoples to shrug off their dependency on European goods and technologies, reassert their faith in Native spirituality and rituals, and to cooperate with one another against the “White people’s ways and nature.” Additionally, Neolin advocated violence against British encroachments on Indian lands, which escalated after
the Seven Years’ War. His message was particularly
effective in the Ohio and Upper Susquehanna Valleys,
where polyglot communities of indigenous refugees
and migrants from across eastern North America lived
together. When combined with the militant leadership
of Pontiac, who took up Neolin’s message, the many
Native peoples of the region united in attacks against
British forts and people. From 1763 until 1765, the
Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Upper Susquehanna
Valley areas were embroiled in a war between
Pontiac’s confederacy and the British Empire, a war
that ultimately forced the English to restructure how
they managed Native-British relations and trade.

In the interim between 1765 and 1811, other
Native prophets kept Neolin’s message alive while
encouraging indigenous peoples to resist Euro-
American encroachments. These individuals included
the Ottawa leader the Trout, Joseph Brant of the
Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), the Creek headman Mad
Dog, Painted Pole of the Shawnee, a Mohawk woman
named Coocoochee, Main Poc of the Potawatomi,
and the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake. Once
again, the epicenter of this pan-Indian resistance and
revitalization originated in the Ohio Valley and Great
Lakes regions, where from 1791 to 1795 a joint force
of Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Iroquois, Ojibwe,
Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomi, Mingo, Chickamauga,
and other indigenous peoples waged war against the
American republic (the “Northwest Indian War”).
Although this “Western Confederacy” ultimately
suffered defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in
1794, this Native coalition achieved a number of
military victories against the republic, including the
destruction of two American armies, forcing President
Washington to reformulate federal Indian policy.
Tecumseh’s experiences as a warrior against the
American military in this conflict probably influenced
his later efforts to generate solidarity among North
American indigenous communities.
Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa articulated ideas and beliefs similar to their eighteenth-century predecessors. In particular, Tenskwatawa pronounced that the Master of Life entrusted him and Tecumseh with the responsibility for returning Native peoples to the one true path and to rid Native communities of the dangerous and corrupting influences of Euro-American trade and culture. Tenskwatawa stressed the need for a cultural and religious renewal, which coincided with his blending the various tenets, traditions, and rituals of indigenous religions and Christianity. In particular, Tenskwatawa emphasized apocalyptical elements that contributed to a belief that he and his followers would usher in a new world that would restore Native power to the continent.

For Native peoples who gravitated to the Shawnee brothers, this emphasis on cultural and religious revitalization was empowering and spiritually liberating, especially given the continuous American assaults on Native land and power in the early nineteenth century.

Tecumseh’s confederacy drew heavily from indigenous communities in the Old Northwest as he capitalized upon a festering hatred for the land-hungry American republic. Tecumseh attracted a wealth of allies in his adamant refusal to concede any more land to the republic, in a sense professing a pan-Indian sovereignty that eluded Native communities during the eighteenth-century. Tecumseh proclaimed that the Master of Life tasked him with the responsibility of returning Native lands to their rightful owners. In his efforts to promote unity among Native peoples, Tecumseh also offered these communities a distinctly “Indian identity” that brought disparate Native peoples together under the banner of a common spirituality, together resisting an oppressive force.

In short, the spiritual underpinnings of Tecumseh’s confederacy provided the cohesive glue to the diverse communities that comprised Tecumseh’s resistance movement. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were not above using this nativist and pan-Indian rhetoric to legitimate their own authority within indigenous communities at the expense of other Native leaders, which manifested most visibly during Tenskwatawa’s witch-hunts of the 1800s as he accused his opponents and other “accommodationists” of witchcraft.

While Tecumseh attracted Native peoples from around the northwest and some from the southeast, the Red Stick Creeks brought these ideas to the southeast. Led by the Creek prophet Hillis Hadjo, who accompanied Tecumseh when he toured throughout the southeast in 1811, the Red Sticks integrated certain religious tenets from the north as well as invented new religious practices specific to the Creeks, all the while communicating and coordinating with Tecumseh after he left Creek Country. In doing so, the Red Sticks joined Tecumseh in his resistance movement while seeking to purge Creek society of its Euro-American dependencies. Creek leaders who maintained relationships with the U.S., in contrast, believed accommodation and diplomacy might stave off American encroachments better than violence.
Additionally, the Red Sticks discovered that most southeastern indigenous leaders cared little for Tecumseh’s confederacy. This lack of allies hindered the spread of a pan-Indian movement in the southeast, and the nativist and militant Red Sticks soon found themselves in a civil war against other Creeks. Tecumseh thus found little support in the southeast beyond the Red Sticks, who by 1813 were cut off from the north by Andrew Jackson. Shortly thereafter, Jackson’s forces were joined by Lower Creek and Cherokee forces that helped defeat the Red Sticks, culminating in Jackson’s victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Following their defeat, the Red Sticks were forced to cede an unprecedented fourteen million acres of land at the Treaty of Fort Jackson. As historian Adam Rothman argues, the defeat of the Red Sticks provided the means for the United States to expand westward beyond the Mississippi, guaranteeing the continued existence and profitability of a slave economy.

Similar to the Red Sticks, Tecumseh found that many Native leaders refused to join him and maintained their loyalties to the American republic, which diminished the potential for a truly pan-Indian resistance movement. Coupled with the losses that his forces sustained at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 on account of Tenskwatawa’s recklessness (an event that created an antagonistic divide between the brothers), Tecumseh’s confederation floundered as their conflict with the United States was soon swept up in the larger war between the American republic and British Empire in 1812. While Tecumseh and his confederated army seized several American forts on their own initiative, Tecumseh eventually solicited British aid after sustaining heavy losses from American fighters at Fort Wayne and Fort Harrison. Even then, Tecumseh’s confederacy faced an uphill battle, particularly after American naval forces secured control of the Great Lakes in September 1813, forcing British ships and reinforcements to retreat. Yet Tecumseh and his Native allies fought on despite their encirclement by American forces. As Tecumseh intimated to the British commander Henry Proctor, “Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them.” Not soon thereafter, Tecumseh fell on the battlefields of Moraviantown (Ontario) in October 1813 and his death dealt a severe blow to the pan-Indian front against the United States. Men like Tecumseh and Pontiac, however, left behind a legacy of pan-Indian unity against white land encroachment.

VI. The War of 1812

Soon after Jefferson retired from the presidency in 1808, Congress ended the Embargo, as the British relaxed their policies toward American ships. Although it was unpopular, Jefferson still believed that more time would have proven that peaceable coercion truly was an effective weapon of international diplomacy. Yet war with Britain loomed—a war that would galvanize the young American nation and convince many citizens that the many voices now inhabiting the national political arena all spoke with one voice.
The War of 1812 stemmed from the United States’ entanglement in two distinct sets of international issues. The first had to do with the nation’s desire to maintain its position as a neutral trading nation during the series of Anglo-French wars, which began in the aftermath of the French Revolution in 1793. The second had older roots in the colonial and Revolutionary era. In both cases, American interests and goals conflicted with those of the British Empire. And each time, British leaders showed little interest in accommodating the Americans.

Impressments, that is the practice of forcing American sailors to join the British Navy was among the most important sources of conflict between the two nations. Driven in part by trade with Europe, the American economy grew quickly during the first decade of the nineteenth century, creating a labor shortage in the American shipping industry. In response, pay rates for sailors increased and American captains recruited heavily from the ranks of British sailors. As a result, around 30 percent of sailors employed on American merchant ships were British. As a republic, the Americans advanced the notion that people could become citizens by renouncing their allegiance to their home nation. To the British, a person born in the British Empire was a subject of that empire for life, a status they could not change. The British Navy was embroiled in a difficult war and was unwilling to lose any of its labor force. In order to regain lost crewmen, the British often boarded American ships to reclaim their sailors. Of course, many American sailors found themselves caught up in these sweeps and “impressed” into the service of the British Navy. Between 1803 and 1812, some 6,000 Americans suffered this fate. The British would release Americans who could prove their identity but this process could take years while the sailor endured harsh conditions and the dangers of the Royal Navy.

In 1806, responding to a French declaration of a complete naval blockade of Great Britain, the British demanded that neutral ships first carried their goods to Britain to pay a transit duty before they could proceed to France. Despite loopholes in these policies between 1807 and 1812, Britain, France, and their allies seized about 900 American ships, prompting a swift and angry American response. Jefferson’s Embargo sent the nation into a deep depression and drove exports down from $108 million in 1807 to $22 million in 1808, all while having little effect on Europeans. Within fifteen months Congress repealed the Embargo, replacing it with smaller restrictions on trade with Britain and France. Although, the Republican efforts to stand against Great Britain had failed, resentment of British trade policy remained widespread in American society.

Far from the Atlantic Ocean on the American frontier, Americans were also at odds with the British Empire. From their position in Canada, the British maintained relations with Native Americans in the Old Northwest, supplying them with goods and weapons in attempts to maintain ties in case of another war.
with the United States. The threat of a Native uprising increased after 1805 when Tenskwatawa began to preach a new religious doctrine that rejected the Europeans and their way of life. By 1809, Tecumseh, had turned the movement into a military and political alliance when he attempted to unite the tribes against the encroaching Americans. The territorial governor of Illinois, William Henry Harrison eventually convinced the Madison administration to allow for military action against the Native Americans in the Ohio Valley. The resulting Battle of Tippecanoe drove the followers of the Prophet from their gathering place, but did little to change the dynamics of the region. British efforts to arm and supply Native Americans, however, angered Americans and strengthened anti-British sentiments.

Republicans began to talk of war as a solution to these problems, arguing that it was necessary to complete the War for Independence by preventing British efforts to keep America subjugated at sea and on land. The war would also represent another battle against the Loyalists, some 38,000 of whom had populated Upper Canada after the Revolution and sought to establish a counter to the radical experiment of the United States.

In 1812, the Republicans held 75 percent of the seats in the House and 82 percent of the Senate, giving them a free hand to set national policy. Among them were the “War Hawks,” who one historian has described as “too young to remember the horrors of the American Revolution,” and thus “willing to risk another British war to vindicate the nation’s rights and independence.” This group included men who would remain influential long after the War of 1812, such as Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.

Convinced by the War Hawks in his party, Madison drafted a statement of the nation’s disputes with the British and asked Congress for a war declaration on June 1, 1812. The Republicans hoped that an invasion of Canada might remove the British from their backyard and force the Empire to change their naval policies. After much negotiation in Congress over the details of the bill, Madison signed a declaration of war on June 18, 1812. For the second time, the United States was at war with Great Britain.

While the War of 1812 contained two key players—the United States and Great Britain—it also drew in other groups, such as Tecumseh and the Indian Confederacy. The war can be organized into three stages or theaters. The first, the Atlantic Theater lasted until the spring of 1813. During this time, Great Britain was chiefly occupied in Europe against Napoleon, and the United States invaded Canada and sent their fledgling navy against British ships. During the second stage, from early 1813 to 1814, the U.S. launched their second offensive against Canada and the Great Lakes. In this period, the Americans, having gained some experience in 1812 and early 1813, won its first successes. The third stage, the Southern
Theater, concluded with Andrew Jackson’s January 1815 victory at Chalmette outside of New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the war, the Americans were greatly interested in Canada and the Great Lakes borderlands. In July 1812, the U.S. launched their first offensive against Canada. By August, however, the British and their allies defeated the Americans in Canada, costing the U.S. control over Detroit and parts of the Michigan Territory. By the close of 1813, the Americans recaptured Detroit, shattered the Indian Confederacy, killed Tecumseh, and eliminated the British threat in that theater. Despite these accomplishments, the American land forces proved outmatched by their adversaries.

After the land campaign of 1812 failed to secure America’s war aims, Americans turned to the infant navy in 1813. Privateers and the U.S. Navy rallied behind the slogan “Free Trade and Sailors Rights!” Although the British possessed the most powerful navy in the world, surprisingly the young American navy extracted early victories with larger, more heavily armed ships. By 1814, however, the major naval battles had been fought with little effect on the war’s outcome.

With Britain’s main naval fleet fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, smaller ships and armaments stationed in North America were generally no match for their American counterparts. Early on, Americans humiliated the British in single ship battles. In retaliation, Captain Phillip Broke, of the *HMS Shannon* attacked the *USS Chesapeake* captained by James Lawrence on June 1, 1813. Within six minutes, the *Chesapeake* was destroyed and Lawrence mortally wounded. Yet, the Americans did not give up as Lawrence commanded them “Tell the men to fire faster! Don’t give up the ship!” Lawrence died of his wounds three days later and although the *Shannon* defeated the *Chesapeake*, Lawrence’s words became a rallying cry for the Americans.

Two and a half months later the *USS Constitution* squared off with the *HMS Guerriere*. As the *Guerriere* tried to outmaneuver the Americans, the *Constitution* pulled along broadside and began hammering the British frigate. The *Guerriere* returned fire, but as one sailor observed the cannonballs...
simply bounced off the Constitution’s thick hull. “Huzza! Her sides are made of Iron!” shouted the sailor and henceforth, the Constitution became known as “Old Ironsides.” In less than thirty-five minutes, the Guerriere was so badly destroyed it was set aflame rather than taken as a prize.

In 1814, Americans gained naval victories on Lake Champlain near Plattsburgh, preventing a British land invasion of the United States and on the Chesapeake at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. Fort McHenry repelled the nineteen-ship British fleet enduring twenty-seven hours of bombardment virtually unscathed. Watching from aboard a British ship, American poet Francis Scott Key penned the verses of what would become the national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Impressive though these accomplishments were, they belied what was actually a poorly executed military campaign against the British. The U.S. Navy won their most significant victories in the Atlantic Ocean in 1813. Napoleon’s defeat in early 1814, however, allowed the British to focus on North America and their blockade of the East coast. Thanks to the blockade, the British were able to burn Washington D.C. on August 24, 1814 and open a new theater of operations in the South. The British sailed for New Orleans where they achieved a naval victory at Lake Borgne before losing the land invasion to Major General Andrew Jackson’s troops in January 1815. This American victory actually came after the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, but the Battle of New Orleans proved to be a psychological victory that boosted American morale and affected how the war has been remembered.

But not all Americans supported the war. In 1814, New England Federalists met in Hartford, Connecticut, to try to end the war and curb the power of the Republican Party. They produced a document that proposed abolishing the three-fifths rule that afforded Southern slaveholders disproportionate representation in Congress, limiting the president to a single term in office, and most importantly, demanding a two-thirds congressional majority, rather than a simple majority, for legislation that declared war, admitted new states into the Union, or regulated commerce. With the two-thirds majority, New England’s Federalist politicians believed they could limit the power of their political foes.
These proposals were sent to Washington, but unfortunately for the Federalists, the victory at New Orleans buoyed popular support for the Madison administration. With little evidence, newspapers accused the Hartford Convention’s delegates of plotting secession. The episode demonstrated the waning power of Federalism, and the need for the region’s politicians to shed their aristocratic and Anglophile image. The next New England politician to assume the presidency, John Quincy Adams in 1824, would emerge not from within the Federalist fold, but after serving as Secretary of State under President James Monroe, the last leader of the Virginia Republicans.

The Treaty of Ghent essentially returned relations between the U.S. and Britain to their pre-war status. The war, however, mattered politically and strengthened American nationalism. During the war, Americans read patriotic newspaper stories, sang patriotic songs, and bought consumer goods decorated with national emblems. They also heard stories about how the British and their Native allies threatened to bring violence into American homes. For examples, rumors spread that British officers promised rewards of “beauty and booty” for their soldiers when they attacked New Orleans. In the Great Lakes borderlands, wartime propaganda fueled Americans fear of Britain’s Native American allies, who they believed would slaughter men, women, and children indiscriminately. Terror and love worked together to make American citizens feel a stronger bond with their country. Because the war mostly cut off America’s trade with Europe, it also encouraged Americans to see themselves as different and separate; it fostered a sense that the country had been reborn.

Former treasury secretary Albert Gallatin claimed that the War of 1812 revived “national feelings” that had dwindled after the Revolution. “The people,” he wrote, were now “more American; they feel and act more like a nation.” (Morton Keller, America’s Three Regimes: A New Political History: A New Political History (New York: Oxford, 2007), 69.) Politicians proposed measures to reinforce the fragile Union through capitalism and built on these sentiments of nationalism. The United States continued to expand into Indian territories with westward settlement in
far-flung new states like Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois. Between 1810 and 1830, the country added more than 6,000 new post offices.

In 1817, South Carolina congressman John C. Calhoun called for building projects to “bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals.” He joined with other politicians, such as Kentucky’s powerful Henry Clay, to promote what came to be called an “American System.” They aimed to make America economically independent and encouraged commerce between the states over trade with Europe and the West Indies. The American System would include a new Bank of the United States to provide capital; a high protective tariff, which would raise the prices of imported goods and help American-made products compete; and a network of “internal improvements,” roads and canals to let people take American goods to market.

These projects were controversial. Many people believed they were unconstitutional or that they would increase the federal government’s power at the expense of the states. Even Calhoun later changed his mind and joined the opposition. The War of 1812, however, had reinforced Americans’ sense of the nation’s importance in their political and economic life. Even when the federal government did not act, states created banks, roads, and canals of their own.

What may have been the boldest declaration of America’s postwar pride came in 1823. President James Monroe issued an ultimatum to the empires of Europe in order to support several wars of independence in Latin America. The “Monroe Doctrine” declared that the United States considered its entire hemisphere, both North and South America, off-limits to new European colonization. Although Monroe was a Jeffersonian, some of his principles echoed Federalist policies. Whereas Jefferson cut the size of the military and ended all internal taxes in his first term, Monroe advocated the need for a strong military and an aggressive foreign policy. Since Americans were spreading out over the continent, Monroe authorized the federal government to invest in canals and roads, which he said would “shorten distances, and, by making each part more accessible to and dependent on the other…shall bind the Union more closely together.”

As Federalists had attempted two decades earlier, Republican leaders after the War of 1812 advocated strengthening the state in order to strengthen the nation.

VII. Conclusion

Monroe’s election after the conclusion of the War of 1812 signaled the death knell of the Federalists. Some predicted an “era of good feelings” and an end to party divisions. The War had cultivated a profound sense of union among a diverse and divided people. Yet that “era of good feelings” would never really come. Political division continued. Though the dying Federalists would fade from political relevance, a schism within the Republican Party would give rise
to a new brand of Jacksonian Democrats. Meanwhile, despite the virtually total elimination of property requirements for voting, political limits continued along class, gender, and racial and ethnic lines. At the same time, industrialization and the development of American capitalism required new justifications of inequality as compatible with a democratic nation and nativist reactions to changing demographics would parcel “true” Americans from dangerous or undeserving “others.” Still, a cacophony of voices clamored to be heard and struggled to realize a social order compatible with the ideals of equality and individual liberty. As always, the meaning of democracy was in flux.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
Jeffersonian Era Timeline: 1800 - 1825

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800 - 1801</td>
<td>• Revolution of 1800 – Jefferson elected president via vote in House of Representatives, over Aaron Burr, after thirty-six tries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>• Gabriel Prosser’s (slave) Rebellion in Virginia led to twenty-seven executions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>• Supreme Court ruling on <em>Marbury v. Madison</em> issued. United States warned by Britain and France not to trade with the other. Louisiana Purchase occurred. Ohio became a state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>• United States Marines and other mercenaries sent to fight in Mediterranean (Tripoli).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804 - 1805</td>
<td>• Lewis and Clark expedition occurred. Thomas Jefferson reelected president.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>• <em>Chesapeake-Leopard affair.</em> Embargo Act passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>• Democratic-Republican, James Madison, elected president. International slave trade ended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>• Treaty of Fort Wayne signed. Non-Intercourse Act passed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>• Battle of Tippecanoe occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>• War of 1812 started. James Madison reelected president. Louisiana became a state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>• Battle of New Orleans occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>• Democratic-Republican, James Monroe, elected president. Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States. Indiana became a state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>• Mississippi became a state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>• Illinois became a state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>• Adams-Onis Treaty signed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Missouri Compromise legislated, leading to Maine (1820) and Missouri (1821) entering the Union as states. James Monroe reelected president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Monroe Doctrine announced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Nationalist Republican, John Quincy Adams, elected by House of Representatives as president in disputed election.</td>
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UNIT 6

JACKSONIAN ERA

Getting to Jackson’s Presidency

Changes in the Electorate:
During this era, voting rights were extended to yeoman farmers and other citizens, who previously were under-represented in their state legislatures. In the 1820-30s, reformers fought for and won “universal white manhood suffrage,” which is voting rights for all white males. And some states established the popular election of governors and of the electors for the electoral college for the first time. This changed the composition of the voting public and resulted in changes to how political campaigns operated and to whom they tried to appeal. Thus going into the elections of 1824 and 1828 the common man had more political voice, and political campaigns had to contend with this new voice within the constituency.

The Election of 1824:
This election brought John Q. Adams into office under a cloud of scandal and resentment. In the running, were four candidates, all essentially under the Democratic-Republican banner. Adams was from Massachusetts and was Secretary of State under Monroe’s administration. Andrew Jackson was the old War of 1812 military hero from Tennessee. William Crawford was an extreme states rightist from Georgia, who had been secretary of the treasury under Monroe. And, Henry Clay, from Kentucky, tried to appeal to westerners by pushing the “American System” of internal improvements to stimulate trade and industry. Crawford was very ill, so the viable candidates were Adams, Jackson, and Clay. Jackson already hated Adams, because he felt that Adams had attacked Jackson’s actions in Spanish Florida before the Adams-Onis treaty. And, Jackson would come to hate Adams even more as a result of the election. When the votes were counted, John C. Calhoun was elected vice president, however the presidency was not that clear. Jackson got a plurality and not a majority of the popular vote, and in electoral college he received 99 votes. Adams won 84; Crawford won 41 (but he was sickly), and Clay won only 37. Therefore, as the 12th Amendment states, the election went into the House where the representatives had to choose from the top 3 candidates (Adams, Crawford, Jackson). Thus, with Crawford ill and Clay out of the race, Jackson and Adams contended for those votes. Before the House decided the question, Adams asked Clay for his support, as the two men had similar political agendas, i.e. internal improvements. Clay threw his votes to Adams. Upon winning, Adams rewarded Clay with the administrative position of Secretary of State, which many viewed as the stepping stone to the presidency. This fact angered Jackson to the point of charging that Adams and Clay struck a prior deal or a “corrupt bargain.” This fact angered Jackson so much so that he resigned his seat in the Senate and took the nomination of the state legislature of Tennessee to run for president in 1828. Jackson spent the next 4 years working against the Adams’ administration in an attempt to discredit, block, and campaign against
Adams in the next election. As a result, Adams did not achieve his goals during his presidency and was a “one-termer.”

The Election of 1828:
“Nasty” was the word used to describe this campaign. Both men’s camps used the popular press to draw support and to attack each other. Adams’ camp spread the “coffin handbills” listing the names of the men Jackson had killed in duels or had executed, calling him a murderer. Adams’ men also claimed Jackson and his wife were adulterers, because when they married, his wife unknowingly was not legally divorced from her ex-husband. (After Jackson was elected his wife died, and he will blame Adams for “murdering” his wife through slander). Jackson’s camp claimed that since Adams’ son purchased a pool table that there was gambling in the White House and that, when Adams was Minister to Russia, he had pimped women (Yes, you read that right) for the Tzar. Jackson also attacked Adams as a “monarchist” for wanting a national university and as an “Indian-supporter” for not backing the call for the removal of the Cherokee from the southeastern part of the country. The election was an overwhelming victory for Jackson, who made an appeal to the common man through his military hero image, racism, and talk of increasing democracy for the common man.

Now, it is true that Jackson was born into a poorer family and had little formal schooling. But, despite this, he read law and passed the bar examination at age 17. He moved to Nashville, Tennessee where he gained wealth through land speculation and through marrying up the socio-economic ladder (as many of the presidents did). He launched both his military and political career from Tennessee.

Life During the Jacksonian Period:
This is an overview only; we’ll study life in the ante-bellum South and North as individual units. During Jackson’s era, many changes occurred in American society. Americans became more risk- and profit-minded, with an optimistic view of the liberty and freedom that the country provided. The Second Great Awakening sparked interested in reform movements (i.e. temperance) and social experiments (i.e. utopias). A transportation revolution started with canals, steam power, and railroads making travel faster and markets more accessible. Many wanted federal monies to aid in these developments, while people also wanted the government to provide cheap or free lands to the public. Cash crops such as grains in the West, corn in the East, and cotton/tobacco in the South raised revenues domestically and internationally. Immigration increased, especially with Germans (who settled in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest) and the Irish (who settled primarily in the eastern cities of the North).
Andrew Jackson’s Administration

The Cabinet:

- Vice President: John C. Calhoun
- Notable Members of Jackson’s Cabinet:
  - Secretary of State Martin Van Buren (Gov. of NY - resigned to take position), Secretary of War John Eaton (from Tenn. - long time friend of Jackson), Secretary of Treasury, Roger B. Taney
- Jackson’s Kitchen Cabinet: an informal group of advisors to Jackson who met in the White House kitchen regularly. Members included: Van Buren, Taney, other politicians and newspaper editors.

Jackson’s Actions and Changes:

- Retrenchment: In response to calls for government reform, Jackson cut wasteful expenses including some jobs and salaries, but he made new appointments using his supporters.
- Spoils System: “To the victor goes the spoils!” Jackson believed that when a politician won office he had earned the right to reward his political supporters with government jobs.
- Rotation in Office: Jackson believed that, in order to promote “democracy,” civil service jobs needed to be opened to new employees instead of held as career-long positions.
- The Veto Power: Jackson vetoed 12 bills, which was greater than the first 6 presidents combined. He was the first to use the “pocket veto” (This is when a president sits on a bill until Congress goes out of session, which automatically vetoes the bill without presidential explanation).

Scandals & Politics

- The Peggy Eaton Affair: Vice President Calhoun’s wife decided to lead the social ostracizing of one Peggy Eaton. Mrs. Eaton was the daughter of a Washington D.C. tavern owner and the wife of cabinet member, John Eaton. Jackson and Eaton were friends, and the old man even “blessed” the marriage between John and Peggy. Jackson took personal offense to any slander of Peggy’s reputation, because of how his wife suffered during the 1828 campaigning. He told his cabinet members to control their wives, for he considered any attack on Peggy as a personal attack on him! Calhoun’s wife did not listen, and thus he fell out of favor with Jackson. This lead in part to Jackson’s reorganization of the cabinet.
- The Crawford Letter and Seminole Correspondence: At this time, a letter written by William Crawford surfaced (candidate for president in 1824, but also a cabinet member during
Monroe’s administration during Jackson’s raid on Spanish-Florida). It revealed that it was Calhoun (not Adams, as Jackson thought) who had opposed Jackson’s raid on Florida and who wanted him demoted. Though not endearing Adams to Jackson, the letter disturbed Jackson, who confronted Calhoun about the incident through a series of letters. Calhoun never denied nor defended what the Crawford Letter revealed, and in an effort to discredit Jackson he published the correspondence (Seminole Correspondence) between Jackson and himself in a D.C. newspaper. Jackson was infuriated, and this led in part to the reorganization of the cabinet scandal.

- The Reorganization of the Cabinet: Due to the conflict existing between Jackson and Vice President Calhoun AND the fact that some members of his cabinet were pro-Calhoun men, Jackson wanted to disband his cabinet without too much scandal. Van Buren offered a plan; he and Eaton would resign and be given ministerial positions to foreign nations. This would give Jackson a reason to disband the cabinet, putting only pro-Jackson men in those offices. Jackson did what Van Buren suggested, but despite the efforts to make the reorganization seem “above board,” it resulted in scandal. But, as Jackson had hoped, it also resulted in Calhoun’s resignation from the vice presidency.

### Domestic Issues

Various domestic issues in his administration revealed the tensions between the North and South and Jeffersonianism and Hamiltonianism during the era.

#### Indian Removal:

Jackson favored the removal of the Native American population in the southeastern U.S. and promised removal as part of his 1828 campaign. Jackson asked Congress for the power to remove the Indians in 1829. Some people objected, but largely the maneuver went unopposed. Congress passed a bill to create an area west of the Mississippi to where the Natives of the East would be moved, in “exchange” for the lands they occupied. The Native Americans were to have perpetual title to these lands, and the cost of removal and subsistence support for the Indians for one year was to be paid by the federal government. However, Congress only budgeted $500,000. (The removal ultimately required about $68 Million). Tribes were removed via negotiation and force. Some did not want to leave and resisted the government’s efforts. Two lawsuits resulted. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) the Natives hired a lawyer to sue against the removal. The Supreme Court under John Marshall decided that the Native Americans were domestic dependents of the United States, NOT of individual states, and could not be removed. (How was this Hamiltonian? If you are struggling with this answer, then post a question to the class’ Course Questions DB) In *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) Natives sued in reference to a Georgian law prohibiting whites from
entering Indian territories. The Supreme Court under Marshall decided that Georgia’s law was unconstitutional, because only the Federal government, and the Cherokees themselves, could say who could have contact with them. The end result was that Jackson ignored the Supreme Court’s ruling (broke the law) and proceeded with the removal process. The Trail of Tears had severe consequences for the Native Americans involved. Be certain to understand the details of the Trail of Tears and the effect it had on the Indian population from the chapter in your text.

**Internal Improvements:**

One of the leading questions of the era was whether or not the federal government should have the authority to spend money on internal improvements. Some people argued completely against it, while others simply were against the use of federal monies for intrastate improvements. And, still others were in favor of federal funding of both intra- and interstate projects. The best example of this debate at the time was in relationship to the Maysville Road Bill. The background to this was that in 1811 Congress authorized the building of a national road starting in Maryland. During Jackson’s administration Congress debated and passed a bill extending the road from Maysville, Kentucky to Lexington, Kentucky. The bill thus proposed the federal funding of an intrastate road. Men like Henry Clay supported this bill, however Jackson vetoed it, arguing that it was unconstitutional for the federal government to fund an intrastate project versus an interstate one.

**The Nullification Crisis:**

(Nullification means to make null and void.) In 1828 South Carolina declared that the Tariff of 1828 was unjust, arguing that it protected New England’s manufacturing interests, while hurting the South’s purchasing power and exports to foreign countries. Arguments ensued, revealing the different interpretations Southerners (Jeffersonian) and Northerners (Hamiltonian) had toward the Constitution and from where government gets its power via social contract. South Carolina held a convention in 1832 and nullified the treaty within the state. This action triggered the “Nullification Crisis.” The philosophical ideas that Southerners used to justify nullification (and later secession) were articulated for a generation of Southerners by John C. Calhoun. He further defined the Jeffersonian concept of state rights, which included the concepts of nullification and secession. He published his ideas in the “South Carolina Exposition and Protest” of 1828. Calhoun also articulated these sentiments at a “Jefferson Day” dinner at which he openly contradicted Jackson’s opinion that nullification was illegal. The concept of State Rights was justified by a specific interpretation of from where the federal government gets its power to govern. The U.S. system of government was devised according to Lockean principles (Recall: John Locke the Enlightenment, social contract, and natural rights). Accordingly, the idea was held that the people empower the government to rule over them via the Constitution (social contract). However, Northerners and Southerners debated what role state governments played in this power-giving process. For those who supported state rights (like
Calhoun), power went from the people, to the states, and THEN from the states to the federal government. Under this model, the premise was that if the states gave power to the federal government, they could take it away (making nullification and secession legal options). In contrast, those favoring a strong central government over states rights argued that there was no power-giving relationship between the states and the federal government. The PEOPLE, they argued, gave power directly to the states and separately & directly to the federal government. In this model the federal government was the higher level of government, because the people said so via the Constitution. Therefore, secession and nullification were illegal actions. It is rather important to understand these concepts, as they explain WHY the South (embracing the State Rights interpretation) felt it could legally leave the Union, and why the North (favoring the strong central government interpretation) fought to preserve the Union. As it was, Jackson would have no talk of nullification in HIS administration and got Congress to pass the Force Act, which empowered him to use military force to collect the tariff. He declared South Carolina’s act as treasonous, and told South Carolinians that he would have no problem using force. It did not come to that, though. (It is important to note that Jackson acted out of ego first and ideology second. This was why he contradicted himself at times. Thus, when studying Jackson’s administration, it is important to understand what Jackson’s positions were on given issues, but it is more important to understand the state rights v. strong central government arguments involved in each issue.) The situation was resolved through the Compromise Tariff of 1833, devised by Henry Clay. This tariff gradually reduced the tariff levels to those of a previous decade. South Carolina agreed to the compromise, taking back the nullification of the tariff. But instead, it nullified the Force Act as a show of state sovereignty. The national government won a small victory in discrediting nullification, but Southerners increasingly held secession as an option.

The Webster-Hayne Debate of 1830: Webster, from Massachusetts and a Whig, asserted that, “Liberty, union, now and forever, one and inseparable.” While Hayne argued from the states rights perspective of Calhoun. These debates furthered sectionalism, because they drew national attention to the different, sectional, interpretations of the Constitution.

The Bank Crisis:
In the years before his presidency, Jackson was a land speculator and suffered economic losses as a result of the National Bank recalling loans. Many people in the West also were hurt and called the bank “Monster bank” and its president, Nicholas Biddle “Tzar Nicholas.” Like many westerners, Jackson blamed the National Bank for his economic woes and wanted it destroyed. In 1832, Henry Clay, in an attempt to make the National Bank a presidential election issue, convinced Biddle to petition for an early rechartering of the bank. The tactic ultimately failed. Jackson ran on an anti-bank platform, and when re-elected he then felt he had a mandate from the people to destroy the bank. (In actuality, most people voted for Jackson be-
cause they liked him, not because of the bank issue.) After several tries to get a Secretary of the Treasury to declare the bank unsound for federal monies, Jackson appointed Roger B. Taney to the post. Taney declared the bank unsafe, gradually spent federal funds already in the bank, and deposited monies into a system of state banks (“pet banks”) chartered to hold federal funds. All efforts that Biddle made to save the bank only made matters worse. The bank officially “died” in 1836, and it was not until the 20th century that the federal government gained significant control over the banking system. The problems resulting from the bank’s destruction were far reaching. People borrowed money from the new “pet banks” and over-speculated. Also, the federal government, for the first and only time, was out of debt and gave its surplus of money to the states. These dynamics created an excess of money and resulted in over-speculation and inflation. Thus, the economy crashed in the Panic of 1837, with the financial crisis dominating Van Buren’s administration. Here are some questions to consider: How did the Bank Crisis reflect the ideological differences of Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism? Which ideology won out?

The Jacksonian Era Beyond Jackson

The Election of 1836:
Due to Jackson viewing internal improvements as unconstitutional, using the spoils system, ending the bank, establishing unfavorable economic policies, & having an administration filled with scandals, a NEW national party - the Whigs - emerged in opposition to “King Andrew,” as they called him (note: the National Republicans were not a strong party). During Jackson’s second administration, the Whigs gained seats in Congress, and after that, they were a significant force in U.S. antebellum era politics. The second party system started, and Hamiltonianism once again had an organized political party promoting its ideology at the national level. The Whigs tended to be supported by industrialists, nativists, Protestants, and some (though in declining numbers) large plantation owners. In the Election of 1836 they ran 3 or 4 candidates against Van Buren, hoping to throw the election into the House of Representatives, where they felt a Whig candidate might be elected. However, by not running one major candidate, they did not have anyone to clearly oppose Van Buren. This, in combination with the fact that the Whig party was not yet well organized, meant victory for Van Buren.

Van Buren’s Administration:
Immediately into Van Buren’s administration, the Panic of 1837 hit. It lasted for the entirety of his administration. Relief occurred at the local level, while Van Buren cut federal spending. All of Van Buren’s economic measures were not enough to combat the economic hardships the nation faced during the panic. The Whigs blamed the Jackson-Van Buren years for the crisis and demanded the reestablishment of the National Bank. Even though they did not get another
bank, the Whigs gained in popularity and campaigned heavily against the legacy of the Jackson-Van Bu- ren years. By the end of VanBuren’s administration, he and the Jacksonian Democrats were very unpopu- lar, and in 1840 the nation decided to vote in a Whig into the presidency.

**The Election of 1840:**

Having done well in the congressional elections of 1838, the Whigs hoped to win the presidency in 1840. They passed over Henry Clay, due to his controversial positions and nominated a military man, William H. Harrison. Harrison was well- known as a fighter of the English and the Native Americans. His running mate was John Tyler, and their campaign slogan was “Tippicanoe and Tyler too!” As a westerner Harrison appealed to frontier voters by running a “Log Cabin; Hard Cider” campaign. At rallies they sang songs, paraded, and passed out cider. Calling Van Buren a “degenerate aristocrat,” Harrison won by a large majority. At his inauguration on a cold, damp day in March of 1841, he caught pneumonia. One month later, to the day, he was dead. His vice-president, Tyler, took over as per the dictates of the Constitution. But, since Harrison was the first president to die in office, no one knew if the vice-president really became the “president” or just administered government in his place. Tyler established the precedent by INSISTING that he was the president and demanded that he be addressed as such. Unfortunately for the Whigs, Tyler was a Democrat in disguise. He vetoed the majority of the Whig’s programs, especially those dealing with internal improvements and Clay’s American System. When Whigs tried to establish the Third National Bank, Tyler vetoed it, and with that move, the Whigs openly broke with their president. Cabinet members resigned, and many Northerners in the Whig party claimed that Tyler, as a Virginia (southern) slave holder, was working against the northern Whig agenda. Thus there was a sectional reaction to Tyler’s policies. This trend, of sectional politics becoming stronger than ideological politics, continued through the presidencies of the 1840s and 1850s, and ultimately led to civil war.

*For the sake of simplicity, due to its general use, we will use the term “state rights.” However, students should be aware that usually state rights, or as also seen “states rights,” is tied to the concept of “dual federalism,” in which states have certain powers and responsibilities, constitutionally. An other term, “state sovereignty” is technology more appropriate for describing the views of southerners, because it emphasizes the thinking that the constitution did not create a unified nation and that states retained independent and sovereign units retaining their power under all circumstances.*

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
I. Introduction

On May 30, 1806, Andrew Jackson, a thirty-nine-year-old Tennessee lawyer, came within inches of death. A duelist’s bullet struck him in the chest, just shy of his heart (the man who fired the gun was purportedly the best shot in Tennessee). But the wounded Jackson remained standing. Bleeding, he slowly steadied his aim and returned fire, and the other man dropped to the ground, mortally wounded. Jackson—still carrying the bullet in his chest—later boasted, “I should have hit him, if he had shot me through the brain.”

The duel in Logan County, Kentucky, was one of many that Jackson fought during the course of his long and highly controversial career. And the tenacity, toughness and vengefulness that carried Jackson alive out of that duel—and the mythology and symbolism that would be attached to it—would also characterize many of his later dealings on the battlefield and in politics. By the time of his death almost forty years later, Andrew Jackson would become an enduring and controversial symbol, a kind of cipher to gauge the ways that various Americans thought about their country.
II. Democracy in the Early Republic

Today, most Americans think democracy is a good thing. We tend to assume the nation’s early political leaders believed the same. Wasn’t the American Revolution a victory for democratic principles? For many of the Founders, however, the answer was no.

A wide variety of people participated in early U.S. politics, especially at the local level. But ordinary citizens’ growing direct influence on government frightened the founding elites. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Alexander Hamilton warned of the “vices of democracy” and said he considered the British government—with its powerful king and parliament—“the best in the world.” Another convention delegate, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, who eventually refused to sign the finished Constitution, agreed. “The evils we experience flow from an excess of democracy,” he proclaimed.

Too much participation by the multitudes, the elite believed, would undermine good order. It would prevent the creation of a secure and united republican society. The Philadelphia physician and politician Benjamin Rush, for example, sensed that the Revolution had launched a wave of popular rebelliousness that could lead to a dangerous new type of despotism. “In our opposition to monarchy,” he wrote, “we forgot that the temple of tyranny has two doors. We bolted one of them by proper restraints; but we left the other open, by neglecting to guard against the effects of our own ignorance and licentiousness.”

Such warnings did nothing to quell Americans’ democratic impulses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Americans who were allowed to vote (and sometimes those who weren’t) went to the polls in impressive numbers. Citizens also made public demonstrations. They delivered partisan speeches at patriotic holiday and anniversary celebrations. They petitioned Congress, openly criticized the president, and insisted that a free people should not defer even to elected leaders. In many people’s eyes, the American republic was a democratic republic: the people were sovereign all the time, not only on election day.

The elite leaders of political parties could not afford to overlook “the cultivation of popular favour,” as Alexander Hamilton put it. Between the 1790s and 1830s, the elite of every state and party learned to listen—or pretend to listen—to the voices of the multitudes. And ironically, an American president, holding the office that most resembles a king’s, would come to symbolize the democratizing spirit of American politics.
III. The Missouri Crisis

A more troubling pattern was also emerging in national politics and culture. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, American politics were shifting toward “sectional” conflict among the states of the North, South, and West.

Since the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, the state of Virginia had wielded more influence on the federal government than any other state. Five of the first six presidents, for example, were from Virginia. Immigration caused by the market revolution, however, caused the country’s population to grow fastest in northern states like New York. Northern political leaders were becoming wary of what they perceived to be a disproportionate influence in federal politics by Virginia and other southern states. Furthermore, many northerners feared that the southern states’ common interest in protecting slavery was creating a congressional voting bloc that would be difficult for “free states” to overcome. The North and South began to clash over federal policy as northern states gradually ended slavery but southern states came to depend even more on slave labor.

The most important instance of these rising tensions erupted in the Missouri Crisis. When white settlers in Missouri, a new territory carved out of the Louisiana Purchase, applied for statehood in 1819, the balance of political power between northern and southern states became the focus of public debate. Missouri already had more than 10,000 slaves and was poised to join the southern slave states in Congress.

Accordingly, Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed an amendment to Missouri’s application for statehood. Tallmadge claimed that the institution of slavery mocked the Declaration of Independence and the liberty it promised to “all men.” He proposed that Congress should admit Missouri as a state only if bringing more slaves to Missouri were prohibited and children born to the slaves there were freed at age twenty-five.

Congressmen like Tallmadge opposed slavery for moral reasons, but they also wanted to maintain a sectional balance of power. Unsurprisingly, the Tallmadge Amendment met with firm resistance from southern politicians. It passed in the House of Representatives due to the support of nearly all the northern congressmen, who had a majority there, but it was quickly defeated in the Senate.

When Congress reconvened in 1820, a senator from Illinois, another new western state, proposed a compromise. Jesse Thomas hoped his offer would not only end the Missouri Crisis but also prevent any future sectional disputes over slavery and statehood. Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky joined in promoting the deal, earning himself the nickname “the Great Compromiser.”
Their bargain, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, contained three parts. First, Congress would admit Missouri as a slave state. Second, Congress would admit Maine (which until now had been a territory of Massachusetts) as a free state, maintaining the balance between the number of free and slave states. Third, the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory would be divided along the 36°30’ line of latitude—or in other words, along the southern border of Missouri. Slavery would be prohibited in other new states north of this line, but it would be permitted in new states to the south. The compromise passed both houses of Congress, and the Missouri Crisis ended peacefully.

Not everyone, however, felt relieved. The Missouri Crisis made the sectional nature of American politics impossible to ignore. Until now, although the Republicans had been strongest in southern states, there had been many northern Republicans as well. The Missouri Crisis split them almost entirely along sectional lines, suggesting trouble to come.

Worse, the Missouri Crisis demonstrated the volatility of the slavery debate. Many Americans, including seventy-seven-year-old Thomas Jefferson, were alarmed at how readily some Americans spoke of disunion and even civil war over the issue. “This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror,” Jefferson wrote. “I considered it at once as the [death] knell of the Union.”

For now, the Missouri Crisis did not result in disunion and civil war as Jefferson and others feared. But it also failed to settle the issue of slavery’s expansion into new western territories, an issue that would cause worse trouble in years ahead.

IV. The Rise of Andrew Jackson

The career of Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), the survivor of that backcountry Kentucky duel in 1806, exemplified both the opportunities and the dangers of political life in the early republic. A lawyer, slave-holder, and general—and eventually the seventh president of the United States—he rose from humble frontier beginnings to become one of the most powerful Americans of the nineteenth century.

A child of Irish immigrants, Andrew Jackson was born on March 17, 1767, on the border between North and South Carolina. He grew up during dangerous times. At age thirteen, he joined an American militia unit in the Revolutionary War, but was soon captured, and a British officer slashed at his head with a sword after he refused to shine the officer’s shoes. Disease during the war had claimed the lives of his two brothers and his mother, leaving him an orphan. Their deaths and his wounds had left Jackson with a deep and abiding hatred of Great Britain.

After the war, Jackson moved west to frontier Tennessee, where despite his poor education, he prospered, working as a lawyer and acquiring land
and slaves. (He would eventually come to keep 150 slaves at the Hermitage, his plantation near Nashville.) In 1796, Jackson was elected as a U.S. representative, and a year later he won a seat in the Senate, although he resigned within a year, citing financial difficulties.

Thanks to his political connections, Jackson obtained a general’s commission at the outbreak of the War of 1812. Despite having no combat experience, General Jackson quickly impressed his troops, who nicknamed him “Old Hickory” after a particularly tough kind of tree.

Jackson led his militiamen into battle in the Southeast, first during the Creek War, a side conflict that started between different factions of Muskogee (Creek) Indians in present-day Alabama. In that war, he won a decisive victory over hostile fighters at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. A year later, he also defeated a large British invasion force at the Battle of New Orleans. There, Jackson’s troops—including backwoods militiamen, free African Americans, Indians, and a company of slave-trading pirates—successfully defended the city and inflicted more than 2,000 casualties against the British, sustaining barely 300 casualties of their own. The Battle of New Orleans was a thrilling victory for the United States, but it actually happened several days after a peace treaty was signed in Europe to end the war. News of the treaty had not yet reached New Orleans.

The end of the War of 1812 did not end Jackson’s military career. In 1818, as commander of the U.S. southern military district, Jackson also launched an invasion of Spanish-owned Florida. He was acting on vague orders from the War Department to break the resistance of the region’s Seminole Indians, who protected runaway slaves and attacked American settlers across the border. On Jackson’s orders in 1816, U.S. soldiers and their Creek allies had already destroyed the “Negro Fort,” a British-built fortress on Spanish soil, killing 270 former slaves and executing some survivors. In 1818, Jackson’s troops crossed the border again. They occupied Pensacola, the main Spanish town in the region, and arrested two British subjects, whom Jackson executed for helping the Seminoles. The execution of these two Britons created an international diplomatic crisis.
Most officials in President James Monroe’s administration called for Jackson’s censure. But Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, the son of former President John Adams, found Jackson’s behavior useful. He defended the impulsive general, arguing that he had been forced to act. Adams used Jackson’s military successes in this First Seminole War to persuade Spain to accept the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which gave Florida to the United States.

Any friendliness between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, however, did not survive long. In 1824, four nominees competed for the presidency in one of the closest elections in American history. Each came from a different part of the country—Adams from Massachusetts, Jackson from Tennessee, William H. Crawford from Georgia, and Henry Clay from Kentucky. Jackson won more popular votes than anyone else. But with no majority winner in the Electoral College, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. There, Adams used his political clout to claim the presidency, persuading Clay to support him. Jackson would never forgive Adams, whom his supporters accused of engineering a “corrupt bargain” with Clay to circumvent the popular will.

Four years later, in 1828, Adams and Jackson squared off in one of the dirtiest presidential elections to date. Pro-Jackson partisans accused Adams of elitism and claimed that while serving in Russia as a diplomat he had offered the Russian emperor an American prostitute. Adams’s supporters, on the other hand, accused Jackson of murder and attacked the morality of his marriage, pointing out that Jackson had unwittingly married his wife Rachel before the divorce on her prior marriage was complete. This time, Andrew Jackson won the election easily, but Rachel Jackson died suddenly before his inauguration. Jackson would never forgive the people who attacked his wife’s character during the campaign.

In 1828, Jackson’s broad appeal as a military hero won him the presidency. He was “Old Hickory,” the “Hero of New Orleans,” a leader of plain frontier folk. His wartime accomplishments appealed to many voters’ pride. In office over the next eight years, he would claim to represent the interests of ordinary white Americans, especially from the South and West, against the country’s wealthy and powerful elite. This attitude would lead him and his allies into a series of bitter political struggles.

V. The Nullification Crisis

Nearly every American had an opinion about President Jackson. To some, he epitomized democratic government and popular rule. To others, he represented the worst in a powerful and unaccountable executive, acting as president with the same arrogance he had shown as a general in Florida. One of the key issues dividing Americans during his presidency was a sectional dispute over national tax policy that would
come to define Jackson’s no-holds-barred approach to government.

Once Andrew Jackson moved into the White House, most southerners expected him to do away with the hated Tariff of 1828, the so-called Tariff of Abominations. This import tax provided protection for northern manufacturing interests by raising the prices of European products in America. Southerners, however, blamed the tariff for a massive transfer of wealth. It forced them to purchase goods from the North’s manufacturers at higher prices, and it provoked European countries to retaliate with high tariffs of their own, reducing foreign purchases of the South’s raw materials.

Only in South Carolina, though, did the discomfort turn into organized action. The state was still trying to shrug off the economic problems of the Panic of 1819, but it had also recently endured the Denmark Vesey slave conspiracy, which convinced white South Carolinians that antislavery ideas put them in danger of a massive slave uprising.

Elite South Carolinians were especially worried that the tariff was merely an entering wedge for federal legislation that would limit slavery. Andrew Jackson’s own vice president, John C. Calhoun, who was from South Carolina, asserted that the tariff was “the occasion, rather than the real cause of the present unhappy state of things.” The real fear was that the federal government might attack “the peculiar domestick institution of the Southern States”—meaning slavery. When Jackson failed to act against the tariff, Vice President Calhoun was caught in a tight position.

In 1828, Calhoun secretly drafted the “South Carolina Exposition and Protest,” an essay and set of resolutions that laid out the doctrine of “nullification.” Drawing from the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 and 1799, Calhoun argued that the United States was a compact among the states rather than among the whole American people. Since the states had created the Union, he had reasoned, they were still sovereign, so a state could nullify a federal statute it considered unconstitutional. Other states would then have to concede the right of nullification or agree to amend the Constitution. If necessary, a nullifying state could leave the Union.

When Calhoun’s authorship of the essay became public, Jackson was furious, interpreting it both as a personal betrayal and as a challenge to his authority as president. His most dramatic confrontation with Calhoun came in 1832 during a commemoration for Thomas Jefferson. At dinner, the president rose and toasted, “Our Federal Union: It must be preserved.” Calhoun responded with a toast of his own: “The Union: next to our Liberty the most dear.” Their divorce was not pretty. Martin Van Buren, a New York political leader whose skill in making deals had earned him the nickname “the Little Magician,” replaced Calhoun as vice president when Jackson ran for reelection in 1832.
Calhoun returned to South Carolina, where a special state convention nullified the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832. It declared them unconstitutional and therefore “null, void, and no law” within South Carolina. The convention ordered South Carolina customs officers not to collect tariff revenue and declared that any federal attempt to enforce the tariffs would cause the state to secede from the Union.

President Jackson responded dramatically. He denounced the ordinance of nullification and declared that “disunion, by armed force, is TREASON.” Vowing to hang Calhoun and any other nullifier who defied federal power, he persuaded Congress to pass a Force Bill that authorized him to send the military to enforce the tariffs. Faced with such threats, other southern states declined to join South Carolina. Privately, however, Jackson supported the idea of compromise and allowed his political enemy Henry Clay to broker a solution with Calhoun. Congress passed a compromise bill that slowly lowered federal tariff rates. South Carolina rescinded nullification for the tariffs but nullified the Force Bill.

The legacy of the Nullification Crisis is difficult to sort out. Jackson’s decisive action seemed to have forced South Carolina to back down. But the crisis also united the ideas of secession and states’ rights, two concepts that had not necessarily been linked before. Perhaps most clearly, nullification showed that the immense political power of slaveholders was matched only by their immense anxiety about the future of slavery. During later debates in the 1840s and 1850s, they would raise the ideas of the Nullification Crisis again.

VI. The Eaton Affair and the Politics of Sexuality

Meanwhile, a more personal crisis during Jackson’s first term also drove a wedge between him and Vice
President Calhoun. The Eaton Affair, sometimes insultingly called the “Petticoat Affair,” began as a disagreement among elite women in Washington, D.C., but it eventually led to the disbanding of Jackson’s cabinet.

True to his backwoods reputation, when he took office in 1829, President Jackson chose mostly provincial politicians, not Washington veterans, to serve in his administration. One of them was his friend John Henry Eaton, a senator from Tennessee, whom Jackson nominated to be his secretary of war.

A few months earlier, Eaton married Margaret O’Neale Timberlake, the recent widow of a navy officer. She was the daughter of Washington boardinghouse proprietors, and her humble origins and combination of beauty, outspokenness, and familiarity with so many men in the boardinghouse had led to gossip. During her first marriage, rumors circulated that she and John Eaton were having an affair while her husband was at sea. When her first husband committed suicide and she married Eaton just nine months later, the society women of Washington had been scandalized. One wrote that Margaret Eaton’s reputation had been “totally destroyed.”

John Eaton was now secretary of war, but other cabinet members’ wives refused have anything to do with her. No respectable lady who wanted to protect her own reputation could exchange visits with her, invite her to social events, or be seen chatting with her. Most importantly, the vice president’s wife, Floride Calhoun, shunned Margaret Eaton, spending most of her time in South Carolina to avoid her, and Jackson’s own niece, Emily Donelson, visited Eaton once and then refused to have anything more to do with her.

Although women could not vote or hold office, they played an important role in politics as people who controlled influence. They helped hold official Washington together. And according to one local society woman, “the ladies” had “as much rivalship and party spirit, desire of precedence and authority” as male politicians had. These women upheld a strict code of femininity and sexual morality. They paid careful attention to the rules that governed personal interactions and official relationships.

Margaret Eaton’s social exclusion thus greatly affected Jackson, his cabinet, and the rest of Washington society. At first, President Jackson blamed his rival Henry Clay for the attacks on the Eatons. But he soon perceived that Washington women and his new cabinet had initiated the gossip. Jackson scoffed, “I did not come here to make a cabinet for the ladies of this place,” and claimed that he “had rather have live vermin on my back than the tongue of one of these Washington women on my reputation.” He began to blame the ambition of Vice President Calhoun for Floride Calhoun’s actions, deciding “it was necessary to put him out of the cabinet and destroy him.”
Jackson was so indignant because had recently been through a similar scandal with his late wife Rachel. Her character, too, had been insulted by leading politicians’ wives because of the circumstances of her marriage. Jackson believed that Rachel’s death had been caused by those slanderous attacks. Furthermore, he saw the assaults on the Eatons as attacks on his authority.

In one of the most famous presidential meetings in American history, Jackson called together his cabinet members to discuss what they saw as the bedrock of society: women’s position as protectors of the nation’s values. There, the men of the cabinet debated Margaret Eaton’s character. Jackson delivered a long defense, methodically presenting evidence against her attackers. But the men attending the meeting—and their wives—were not swayed. They continued to shun Margaret Eaton, and the scandal was resolved only with the resignation of four members of the cabinet, including Eaton’s husband.

VII. The Bank War

Andrew Jackson’s first term was full of controversy. For all of his reputation as a military and political warrior, however, the most characteristic struggle of his presidency was financial. As president, he waged a “war” against the Bank of the United States. The charter of the controversial national bank that Congress had established as part of Alexander Hamilton’s financial plan expired in 1811. But five years later, Congress had given a new charter to the Second Bank of the United States. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the bank was designed to stabilize the growing American economy. By requiring other banks to pay their debts promptly in gold, it was supposed to prevent them from issuing too many paper banknotes that could drop suddenly in value. Of course, the Bank of the United States was also supposed to reap a healthy profit for its private stockholders, like the Philadelphia banker Stephen Girard and the New York merchant John Jacob Astor.

Though many Republicans had supported the new bank, some never gave up their Jeffersonian suspicion that such a powerful institution was dangerous to the republic. Andrew Jackson was one of the skeptics. He and many of his supporters blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819, which had become a severe economic crisis.
depression. The national bank had made that crisis worse, first by lending irresponsibly and then, when the panic hit, by hoarding gold currency to save itself at the expense of smaller banks and their customers. Jackson’s supporters also believed the bank had corrupted many politicians by giving them financial favors.

In 1829, after a few months in office, Jackson set his sights on the bank and its director, Nicholas Biddle. Jackson became more and more insistent over the next three years as Biddle and the bank’s supporters fought to save it. A visiting Frenchman observed that Jackson had “declared a war to the death against the Bank,” attacking it “in the same cut-and-thrust style” that he had once fought the Indians and the British. For Jackson, the struggle was a personal crisis. “The Bank is trying to kill me,” he told Martin Van Buren, “but I will kill it!”

The bank’s charter was not due for renewal for several years, but in 1832, while Jackson was running for re-election, Congress held an early vote to reauthorize the Bank of the United States. The president vetoed the bill.

In his veto message, Jackson called the bank unconstitutional and “dangerous to the liberties of the people.” The charter, he explained, didn’t do enough to protect the bank from its British stockholders, who might not have Americans’ interests at heart. In addition, Jackson wrote, the Bank of the United States was virtually a federal agency, but it had powers that were not granted anywhere in the Constitution. Worst of all, the bank was a way for well-connected people to get richer at everyone else’s expense. “The rich and powerful,” the president declared, “too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes.” Only a strictly limited government, Jackson believed, would treat people equally.

Although its charter would not be renewed, the Bank of the United States could still operate for several more years. So in 1833, to diminish its power, Jackson also directed his cabinet to stop depositing federal funds in it. From now on, the government would do business with selected state banks instead. Critics called them Jackson’s “pet banks.”

Jackson’s bank veto set off fierce controversy. Opponents in Philadelphia held a meeting and
declared that the president’s ideas were dangerous to private property. Jackson, they said, intended to “place the honest earnings of the industrious citizen at the disposal of the idle”—in other words, redistribute wealth to lazy people—and become a “dictator.” A newspaper editor said that Jackson was trying to set “the poor against the rich,” perhaps in order to take over as a military tyrant. But Jackson’s supporters praised him. Pro-Jackson newspaper editors wrote that he had kept a “monied aristocracy” from conquering the people.

By giving President Jackson a vivid way to defy the rich and powerful, or at least appear to do so, the Bank War gave his supporters a specific “democratic” idea to rally around. More than any other issue, opposition to the national bank came to define their beliefs. And by leading Jackson to exert executive power so dramatically against Congress, the Bank War also helped his political enemies organize.

Increasingly, supporters of Andrew Jackson referred to themselves as Democrats. Under the strategic leadership of Martin Van Buren, they built a highly organized national political party, the first modern party in the United States. Much more than earlier political parties, this Democratic Party had a centralized leadership structure and a consistent ideological program for all levels of government. Meanwhile, Jackson’s enemies, mocking him as “King Andrew the First,” named themselves after the patriots of the American Revolution, the Whigs.

VIII. The Panic of 1837

Unfortunately for Jackson’s Democrats (and most other Americans), their victory over the Bank of the United States worsened rather than solved the country’s economic problems.

For a while, to be sure, the signs were good. Between 1834 and 1836, a combination of high cotton prices, freely available foreign and domestic credit, and an infusion of specie (“hard” currency in the form of gold and silver) from Europe spurred a sustained boom in the American economy. At the same time, sales of western land by the federal government promoted speculation and poorly regulated lending practices, creating a vast real estate bubble.

Meanwhile, the number of state-chartered banks grew from 329 in 1830 to 713 just six years later. As a result, the volume of paper banknotes per capita in circulation in the United States increased by forty percent between 1834 and 1836. Low interest rates in Great Britain also encouraged British capitalists to make risky investments in America. British lending across the Atlantic surged, raising American foreign indebtedness from $110 to $220 million over the same two years.

As the boom accelerated, banks became more careless about the amount of hard currency they kept on hand to redeem their banknotes. And although Jackson had
hoped that his bank veto would reduce bankers’ and speculators’ power over the economy, it actually made the problems worse.

Two further federal actions late in the Jackson administration also worsened the situation. In June 1836, Congress decided to increase the number of banks receiving federal deposits. This plan undermined the banks that were already receiving federal money, since they saw their funds distributed to other banks. Next, seeking to reduce speculation on credit, the Treasury Department issued an order called the Specie Circular in July 1836, requiring payment in hard currency for all federal land purchases. As a result, land buyers drained eastern banks of even more gold and silver.

By late fall in 1836, America’s economic bubbles began to burst. Federal land sales plummeted. The New York Herald reported that “lands in Illinois and Indiana that were cracked up to $10 an acre last year, are now to be got at $3, and even less.” The newspaper warned darkly, “The reaction has begun, and nothing can stop it.”

Runs on banks began in New York on May 4, 1837, as panicked customers scrambled to exchange their banknotes for hard currency. By May 10, the New York banks, running out of gold and silver, stopped redeeming their notes. As news spread, banks around the nation did the same. By May 15, the largest crowd in Pennsylvania history had amassed outside of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, denouncing banking as a “system of fraud and oppression.”

The Panic of 1837 led to a general economic depression. Between 1839 and 1843, the total capital held by American banks dropped by forty percent as prices fell and economic activity around the nation slowed to a crawl. The price of cotton in New Orleans, for instance, dropped fifty percent.

Traveling through New Orleans in January 1842, a British diplomat reported that the country “presents a lamentable appearance of exhaustion and demoralization.” Over the previous decade, the American economy had soared to fantastic new heights and plunged to dramatic new depths.
Normal banking activity did not resume around the nation until late 1842. Meanwhile, two hundred banks closed, cash and credit became scarce, prices declined, and trade slowed. During this downturn, eight states and a territorial government defaulted on loans made by British banks to finance internal improvements.

IX. The Rise of the Whigs

The Whig Party, which had been created to oppose Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party, benefited from the disaster of the Panic of 1837.

The Whig Party had grown partly out of the political coalition of John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. The National Republicans, a loose alliance concentrated in the Northeast, had become the core of a new anti-Jackson movement. But Jackson’s enemies were a varied group; they included proslavery southerners angry about Jackson’s behavior during the Nullification Crisis as well as antislavery Yankees.

After they failed to prevent Andrew Jackson’s reelection, this fragile coalition formally organized as a new party in 1834 “to rescue the Government and public liberty.” Henry Clay, who had run against Jackson for president and was now serving again as a senator from Kentucky, held private meetings to persuade anti-Jackson leaders from different backgrounds to unite. He also gave the new Whig Party its anti-monarchical name.

At first, the Whigs focused mainly on winning seats in Congress, opposing “King Andrew” from outside the presidency. They remained divided by regional and ideological differences. The Democratic presidential candidate, Vice President Martin Van Buren, easily won election as Jackson’s successor in 1836. But the Whigs gained significant public support after the
Panic of 1837, and they became increasingly well-organized. In late 1839, they held their first national convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

To Henry Clay’s disappointment, the convention voted to nominate not him but General William Henry Harrison of Ohio as the Whig candidate for president in 1840. Harrison was known primarily for defeating Shawnee warriors in the Northwest before and during the War of 1812, most famously at the Battle of Tippecanoe in present-day Indiana. Whig leaders viewed him as a candidate with broad patriotic appeal. They portrayed him as the “log cabin and hard cider” candidate, a plain man of the country, unlike the easterner Martin Van Buren. To balance the ticket with a southerner, the Whigs nominated a slave owning Virginia senator, John Tyler, as vice president. Tyler had been a Jackson supporter but had broken with him over states’ rights during the Nullification Crisis.

Although “Tippecanoe and Tyler, too” easily won the presidential election of 1840, this choice of ticket turned out to be disastrous for the Whigs. Harrison became ill (for unclear reasons, though tradition claims he contracted pneumonia after delivering a nearly two-hour inaugural address without an overcoat or hat) and died after just thirty-one days in office. Harrison thus holds the ironic honor of having the longest inaugural address and the shortest term in office of any American president. Vice President Tyler became president and soon adopted policies that looked far more like Andrew Jackson’s than like a Whig’s. After Tyler twice vetoed charters for another Bank of the United States, nearly his entire cabinet resigned, and the Whigs in Congress expelled “His Accidency” from the party.

The crisis of Tyler’s administration was just one sign of the Whig Party’s difficulty uniting around issues besides opposition to Democrats. The Whig Party would succeed in electing two more presidents, but it would remain deeply divided. Its problems would grow as the issue of slavery strained the Union in the 1850s. Unable to agree upon a consistent national position on slavery, and unable to find another national issue to rally around, the Whigs would break apart by 1856.
X. Anti-Masons, Anti-Immigrants, and the Whig Coalition

The Whig coalition drew strength from several earlier parties, including two that harnessed American political paranoia. The Anti-Masonic Party formed in the 1820s for the purpose of destroying the Freemasons. Later, anti-immigrant sentiment formed the American Party, also called the “Know-Nothings.” The American Party sought and won office across the country in the 1850s, but nativism had already been an influential force, particularly in the Whig Party, whose members could not fail to notice that urban Irish Catholics strongly tended to support Democrats.

Freemasonry, an international network of social clubs with arcane traditions and rituals, seems to have originated in medieval Europe as a trade organization for stonemasons. By the eighteenth century, however, it had outgrown its relationship with the masons’ craft and had become a general secular fraternal order that proclaimed adherence to the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Freemasonry was an important part of the social life of men in the new republic’s elite. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay all claimed membership. Prince Hall, a free leather worker in Boston, founded a separate branch of the order for African American men. However, the Masonic brotherhood’s secrecy, elitism, rituals, and secular ideals generated a deep suspicion of the organization among many Americans.

In 1820s upstate New York, which was fertile soil for new religious and social reform movements, anti-Masonic suspicion would emerge for the first time as an organized political force. The trigger for this was the strange disappearance and probable murder of William Morgan. Morgan announced plans to publish an exposé called Illustrations of Masonry. This book purported to reveal the order’s secret rites, and it outraged other local Freemasons. They launched a series of attempts to prevent the book from being published, including an attempt to burn the press and a conspiracy to have Morgan jailed for alleged debts. In September, Morgan disappeared. He was last seen being forced into a carriage by four men later identified as Masons. When a corpse washed up on the shore of Lake Ontario, Morgan’s wife and friends claimed at first that it was his.

The Morgan story convinced many people that Masonry was a dangerous influence in the republic. The publicity surrounding the trials transformed local outrage into a political movement that, though small, had significant power in New York and parts of New England. This movement addressed Americans’ widespread dissatisfaction about economic and political change by giving them a handy explanation: the republic was controlled by a secret society.

In 1827, local anti-Masonic committees began meeting across the state of New York, committing
not to vote for any political candidate who belonged to the Freemasons. This boycott grew, and in 1828, a convention in the town of LeRoy produced an “Anti-Masonic Declaration of Independence,” the basis for an Anti-Masonic Party. In 1828, Anti-Masonic politicians ran for state offices in New York, winning twelve percent of the vote for governor.

In 1830, the Anti-Masons held a national convention in Philadelphia. But after a dismal showing in the 1832 presidential elections, the leaders of the Anti-Masonic Party folded their movement into the new Whig Party. The Anti-Masonic Party’s absorption into the Whig coalition demonstrated the importance of conspiracy theories in American politics. Just as Andrew Jackson’s followers detected a vast foreign plot in the form of the Bank of the United States, some of his enemies could detect it in the form of the Freemasons. Others, called nativists, blamed immigrants.

Nativists detected many foreign threats, but Catholicism may have been the most important. Nativists watched with horror as more and more Catholic immigrants (especially from Ireland and Germany) arrived in American cities. The immigrants professed different beliefs, often spoke unfamiliar languages, and participated in alien cultural traditions. Just as importantly, nativists remembered Europe’s history of warfare between Catholics and Protestants. They feared that Catholics would bring religious violence with them to the United States.

In the summer of 1834, a mob of Protestants attacked a Catholic convent near Boston. The rioters had read newspaper rumors that a woman was being held against her will by the nuns. Angry men broke into the convent and burned it to the ground. Later, a young woman named Rebecca Reed, who had spent time in the convent, published a memoir describing abuses she claimed the nuns had directed toward novices and students. The convent attack was among many eruptions of “nativism,” especially in New England and other parts of the Northeast, during the early nineteenth century.

Many Protestants saw the Catholic faith as a superstition that deprived individuals of the right to think for themselves and enslaved them to a dictator, the pope, in Rome. They accused Catholic priests of controlling their parishioners and preying sexually on young women. They feared that Catholicism had the potential to overrun and conquer the American political system, just as their ancestors had feared it would conquer England.

The painter and inventor Samuel F. B. Morse, for example, warned in 1834 that European tyrants were conspiring together to “carry Popery through all our borders” by sending Catholic immigrants to the United States. If they succeeded, he predicted, Catholic dominance in America would mean “the certain destruction of our free institutions.” Around the same time, the Protestant minister Lyman Beecher lectured
in various cities, delivering a similar warning. “If the potentates of Europe have no design upon our liberties,” Beecher demanded, then why were they sending over “such floods of pauper emigrants—the contents of the poorhouse and the sweepings of the streets—multiplying tumults and violence, filling our prisons, and crowding our poorhouses, and quadrupling our taxation”—not to mention voting in American elections?

XI. Race and Jacksonian Democracy

More than anything else, however, it was racial inequality that exposed American democracy’s limits. Over several decades, state governments had lowered their property requirements so poorer men could vote. But as northern states ended slavery, whites worried that free black men could also go to the polls in large numbers. In response, they adopted new laws that made racial discrimination the basis of American democracy.

At the time of the Revolution, only two states explicitly limited black voting rights. By 1839, almost all states did. (The four exceptions were all in New England, where the Democratic Party was weakest.) For example, New York’s 1821 state constitution enfranchised nearly all white male taxpayers but only the richest black men. In 1838, a similar constitution in Pennsylvania prohibited black voting completely.

The new Pennsylvania constitution disenfranchised even one of the richest people in Philadelphia. James Forten, a free-born sailmaker who had served in the American Revolution, had become a wealthy merchant and landowner. He used his wealth and influence to promote the abolition of slavery, and now he undertook a lawsuit to protect his right to vote. But he lost, and his voting rights were terminated. An English observer commented sarcastically that Forten wasn’t “white enough” to vote, but “he has always been considered quite white enough to be taxed.”

During the 1830s, furthermore, the social tensions that had promoted Andrew Jackson’s rise also worsened race relations. Almost 400,000 free blacks lived in America by the end of the decade. In the South and West, Native Americans stood in the way of white expansion. And the new Irish Catholic immigrants, along with native working-class whites, often despised nonwhites as competitors for scarce work, housing, and status.

Racial and ethnic resentment thus contributed to a wave of riots in American cities during the 1830s. In Philadelphia, thousands of white rioters torched an antislavery meeting house and attacked black churches and homes. Near St. Louis, abolitionist newspaper editor Elijah Lovejoy was murdered as he defended his printing press. Contemplating the violence, another journalist wondered, “Does it not appear that the character of our people has suffered a considerable change for the worse?”
Racial tensions also influenced popular culture. The white actor Thomas Dartmouth Rice appeared on stage in blackface, singing and dancing as a clownish slave named “Jim Crow.” Many other white entertainers copied him. Borrowing from the work of real black performers but pandering to white audiences’ prejudices, they turned cruel stereotypes into one of antebellum America’s favorite forms of entertainment.

Some whites in the 1830s, however, joined free black activists in protesting racial inequality. Usually, they lived in northern cities and came from the class of skilled laborers, or in other words, the lower middle class. Most of them were not rich, but they expected to rise in the world.

In Boston, for example, the Female Anti-Slavery Society included women whose husbands sold coal, mended clothes, and baked bread, as well as women from wealthy families. In the nearby village of Lynn, many abolitionists were shoemakers. They organized boycotts of consumer products like sugar that came from slave labor, and they sold their own handmade goods at antislavery fundraising fairs. For many of them, the antislavery movement was a way to participate more in “respectable” middle-class culture—a way for both men and women to have a say in American life.
## Unit 6

### TIMELINE

#### Jacksonian Era Timeline: 1816 - 1841

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>Second Bank of the United States established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>John Quincy Adams (National Republican) elected president by House of Representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Tariff of Abominations passed by Congress. Andrew Jackson elected president (Democrat). John C. Calhoun anonymously published the <em>South Carolina Exposition and Protest</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Maysville Road Bill vetoed by Jackson. Indian Removal Act passed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Supreme Court ruled on <em>Cherokee Nation v. Georgia</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>South Carolina nullified federal tariffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Whig party created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Jackson issued the Specie Circular. Martin Van Buren elected president (Democrat).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Panic of 1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Trail of Tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Panic of 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>William Henry Harrison elected president (Whig).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>John Tyler became president after Harrison died.</td>
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Expansion, Sectionalism

**Background:** Back in the 1820s expansionism started to include debates based on the economics of sectionalism. As the nation moved westward, the agendas of the two sections clashed on this and other issues. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 resolved the debate over whether or not Missouri would enter the Union as a state with slave labor or free labor. As the country continued to push westward, the concept of the United States having a Manifest Destiny to control the continent dominated the American psyche. John O’Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review, made the term popular. Though white Americans wanted to see the nation expand, how that expansion should happen and with what aim per the sectional visions for America varied. It remained important to the sections to maintain the balance between free-labor and slave-labor states. Southerners wanted more slave-labor states, while Northerners and small farmers wanted western lands for free labor. Merchants of the Northeast wanted to connect with ports in Texas, Mexico, California, and Oregon. Mormons wanted to remain separate from the United States to live their religious mission, while missionaries wanted to Christianize Native Americans. The push westward was as a fever that over took the nation, and thus the West became a battleground between the forces of sectionalism. Many compromises had to be reached as Northerners and Southerners further developed arguments regarding the defense of their natural rights. For Northerners the argument was that they needed to preserve the liberties of free, white males to make a living unimpeded by slave-labor based economies. For Southerners, their main concern was the maintenance of their right to property. Two fundamental natural rights were in competition, sectionally, and in order to maintain the stability of the Union many politicians and leaders felt compromises had to be reached.

**Texas:** Texas posed a great question to the Union. Southerners, particularly those interested in raising cotton, had been settling in this province of Mexico since the 1820s, when Mexico gained independence from Spain. The Mexican government had encouraged immigration from the US to Texas, promising titles to land, markets for goods, and no taxation. Settlement in Texas was an economic enterprise with groups venturing into the region to settle. For example, Steven Austin led hundreds of Americans to the region in the early 1820s under the Mexican empresario system which gave benefits to settlers. By the 1830s Mexico changed its taxation policies, and under the leadership of General Santa Anna, a self-declared dictator attempted to centralize power over all Mexican provinces. The American settlers declared their independence in 1835, and a battle for freedom ensued. After several key battles, including the battle at the Alamo in San Antonio in March of 1836, which was a defeat for the Texans, and then the Battle of San Jacinto in April, which was a Texan victory, Santa Anna who had been captured negotiated a treaty that recognized the independence
of the Republic of Texas. Texan leaders intended to petition the US for recognition and to enter the Union as a state. Back in Washington D.C., though, Congress and President Jackson were reluctant to act due to a potential war with Mexico and Northern opposition to the annexation of another slave state. In 1837, Texan independence was recognized, and after President Harrison’s death, President Tyler put the steps for Texas’ annexation into motion by circumventing the treaty process via calling for a joint resolution by Congress, and in 1845 Texas joined the Union as a slave-labor state, with the possibility of it being divided into five states in total. The fact that John C. Calhoun of South Carolina admitted in public that the US needed to annex Texas in order to spread slave-labor, identified that Texas had become another wedge between the North and South.

The 1844 Election: John Tyler’s administration was dominated by conflicts with the Whigs. As mentioned, he had worked toward the annexation of Texas, to which Northerners reacted negatively. They believed that annexing the area would lead to a war with Mexico, simply for the sake of expanding the southern economy. Thus, in the 1844 election, the sectionalism weakened the Whig party. Henry Clay was the candidate, while James K. Polk was the Democratic nominee. Playing on the popularity of expansionism at the time, the Democratic platform called for the annexation of both Texas and the Oregon territory. The Whigs supported this, but only on the condition that Texas’ annexation did not lead to a war with Mexico. Plus, they felt that the boundary between Oregon and British Canada should be preserved at the 54th parallel. Trying to gain Whig support, Polk promised to get the Oregon territory up to the 54th parallel, as expressed by his campaign slogan “Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!” Polk won 170 electoral votes on Election Day, but the election was close. Clay, with 105 electoral votes, came the closest he ever did to becoming president.

The Polk Administration

• The Treaty of 1846 signed with Great Britain settled the Oregon boundary question by establishing the boundary between the U.S. and British Canada at the 49th parallel and by allowing the British to have navigation rights on the Columbia River. From this treaty, Oregon would be organized into a territory(ies) and then state(s). Problematic for Polk was the fact that he did not “fight” for Oregon at the 54th parallel. Northerners resented that a compromised was reached on Oregon, an area they were interested in due for ports linking the nation to Asian markets, while Polk did not compromise on matters related to southern territorial aims.

• Texas became part of the Union during TYLER’s administration (1845), but the stipulations of annexation caused sectional controversy in Polk’s administration. Slavery was allowed in the territory, which was not to be
divided into more than 5 states. And, on top of that, the boundary dispute between Texas and Mexico was a cause of the **Mexican War.** It was a war fought, in the eyes of many *Northerners,* for the extension of the southern economy, lifestyle, & labor force into the territories.

- With the **end of the war,** new territories were added to the Union. Thus the age-old question regarding the status of slavery labor in the territories (*believed to be settled by the Missouri Compromise*) was reopened. Anticipating the southern desire to extend the institution of slave labor westward, David Wilmot of Pennsylvania proposed the controversial and much debated **Wilmot Proviso.** The Proviso demanded that no slave labor be allowed in the territories acquired from the Mexican-American War. Congress debated the proviso, once again drawing the nation’s attention to North-South cultural, economic, and political differences. **Stephen A. Douglas** (*and others like Lewis Cass*) supported a compromise method for settling the question over slave labor in the territories - **popular sovereignty.** To Douglas and his camp, slave-labor was an issue of economics not morality and thus could be compromised through, particularly regarding whether or not Congress had the power to restrict slave labor from the territories. Popular sovereignty was the idea that the people in a given territory would decide upon the status of slave or free labor, thus taking it out of the hands of Congress and giving it to the states. The problem with Douglas’ idea was that he never clearly defined when that decision would be made, thus leaving the matter ambiguous. The debates over the Wilmot Proviso and what to do with the lands acquired from Mexico had an impact on the sectional dynamics in the nation.

- The northern parts of the East and West generally supported the Wilmot Proviso, **as northerners did not want to mix with blacks or compete with slave labor** if they were to settle the area. Thus, they wanted to see slave labor banned.

- The South was angered by the proviso, arguing that not the federal government, a state, nor a territory could violate an individual’s right to property. South Carolina threatened secession, but there was not enough popular support from other southern states at the time. Thus, they wanted to see slave labor guaranteed.

- The middle-ground positions both North and South called for compromise. For example, Polk suggested simply extending the Missouri Compromise line to avoid the debate all together.
Both Whigs and Democrats found the issue politically disruptive. Fearing the loss of their northern or southern party members, the parties avoided and ignored the issue of the proviso and what to do with the territories for fear of losing votes. Thus, they avoided one of the very issues that ultimately tore the nation apart.

The Election of 1848

The Candidates:

- The Democrats ran General Lewis Cass (MI) on a platform that praised Polk’s administration, blamed Mexico for the war, and said nothing about the status of slave labor in the territories.

- The Whigs ran Zachary Taylor a Kentucky slave owner for president and Millard Fillmore for vice-president on a platform that was vague and also said nothing about the status of slave labor in the territories.

- A new party emerged for this election. The Free Soil party ran Martin Van Buren for president. The Free Soil Party drew from elements within the major two parties who were angry with the fact that these parties did not address the issue of slave labor in the territories. A few of the Free Soilers were abolitionists, while most were simply opposed the expansion of slave labor for economic and racist reasons. They ran on a platform calling for “free soil, free labor, free land.” They wanted the Free Soil Doctrine to be embraced, meaning that they wanted no more slave labor in the territories and no more compromises on the issue. They preferred free laborers over slave laborers, and promoted the distribution of free land in the West. Some famous Free Soil Party members were: Salmon P Chase (OH), Charles Sumner and Charles F. Adams (Mass.), and Horace Greeley (NY - editor of the NY Tribune).

The Election Results:

Results of the election: The election was “apathetic,” because the big issues facing the nation largely were ignored, especially by the two major parties. Taylor won with a slight majority. However, the Free Soil party gained 13 seats in the House of Representatives, which was just enough to hold a balance in that legislative body between the Whigs and Democrats. Thus, for the next four years the House politically was paralyzed by the forces of sectionalism.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
I. Introduction

John Louis O’Sullivan, a popular editor and columnist, articulated the long-standing American belief in the God-given mission of the United States to lead the world in the peaceful transition to democracy. In a little-read essay printed in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, O’Sullivan outlined the importance of annexing Texas to the United States:

*Why, were other reasoning wanting, in favor of now elevating this question of the reception of Texas into the Union, out of the lower region of our past party dissensions, up to its proper level of a high and broad nationality, it surely is to be found, found abundantly, in the manner in which other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves into it, between us and the proper parties to the case, in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. John Louis O’Sullivan*

O’Sullivan and many others viewed expansion, particularly to the West, as necessary to achieve America’s destiny and protect American interests. The antebellum period saw the quasi-religious call to...
spread democracy coupled with the reality of thousands of settlers pressing westward. The precepts of manifest destiny, grounded in the twin beliefs of virtuous American institutionalism and the uplifting effects of agrarian republicanism, road the wagon trails westward in advance of the destinarian belief in American greatness – the proverbial city on the hill of the colonial period began its move westward.

Although called into name in 1845, manifest destiny was a widely held but vaguely defined belief system that embraced several core beliefs from at least the founding of the nation. First, many Americans believed that the strength of American values and institutions justified moral claims to hemispheric leadership. Second, the lands on the North American continent west of the Mississippi River (and later into the Caribbean) were destined for political and agricultural improvement helmed by American example. Third, Americans who supported expansion believed that God and the Constitution (the political manifestation of divine perfection) ordained an irrepressible destiny to accomplish redemption and democratization throughout the world. All three of these claims pushed many Americans, whether they uttered the words ‘manifest destiny’ or not, to actively seek the expansion of the democracy in both word and action to the great detriment of those, most notably American Indians, already occupying the physical lands in question. The new religion of American democracy spread on the feet and in the wagons of those who moved west and sought to reconfigure their social worlds to the new realities of a new landscape, imbued with the hope that their success would be the nation’s success.

The Young America movement, strongest among members of the Democratic Party but spanning the political spectrum, downplayed divisions over slavery and ethnicity by embracing national unity and emphasizing American exceptionalism, territorial expansion, democratic participation, and economic interdependence. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the political outlook of this new generation in a speech he delivered in 1844 entitled “The Young American”: 

John O’Sullivan, shown here in a 1874 Harper’s Weekly sketch, coined the phrase “manifest destiny” in an 1845 newspaper article. Wikimedia.
In every age of the world, there has been a leading nation, one of a more generous sentiment, whose eminent citizens were willing to stand for the interests of general justice and humanity, at the risk of being called, by the men of the moment, chimerical and fantastic. Which should be that nation but these States? Which should lead that movement, if not New England? Who should lead the leaders, but the Young American? Ralph Waldo Emerson

However, many Americans disapproved of aggressive expansion. For opponents of manifest destiny, the lofty rhetoric of the Young Americans was nothing other than a kind of American imperialism, of imperial policies that the American Revolution was supposed to have repudiated. Many members of the Whig Party (and later the Republican Party) argued that the United States’ mission was to lead by example, not by conquest. Abraham Lincoln summed up this criticism with a fair amount of sarcasm during a speech in 1859:

He (the Young American) owns a large part of the world, by right of possessing it; and all the rest by right of wanting it, and intending to have it... Young America had “a pleasing hope — a fond desire — a longing after” territory. He has a great passion — a perfect rage — for the “new”; particularly new men for office, and the new earth mentioned in the revelations, in which, being no more sea, there must be about three times as much land as in the present. He is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish, but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom. He is very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies, provided, always, they have land...As to those who have no land, and would be glad of help from any quarter, he considers they can afford to wait a few hundred years longer. In knowledge he is particularly rich. He knows all that can possibly be known; inclines to believe in spiritual trappings, and is the unquestioned inventor of “Manifest Destiny.” Abraham Lincoln

But Lincoln and other anti-expansionists would struggle to win popular opinion and the nation, fueled
by the principles of manifest destiny, would continue westward, battling native peoples and foreign nations and claiming territory to the very edges of the continent. But westward expansion did not come without a cost. It exacerbated the slavery question, pushed Americans toward civil war, and, ultimately, threatened the United States’ promises to the peoples of the world.

II. Antebellum Western Migration and Indian Removal

After the War of 1812, Americans settled the Great Lakes region rapidly thanks in part to aggressive land sales by the federal government. Missouri’s admission as a slave state presented the first major crisis over westward migration and American expansion in the antebellum period. Farther north, lead and iron ore mining spurred development in Wisconsin. By the 1830s and 1840s, increasing numbers of German and Scandinavian immigrants joined easterners in settling the Upper Mississippi watershed. Little settlement occurred west of Missouri as migrants viewed the Great Plains as a barrier to farming, the Rocky Mountains as undesirable to all but fur traders, and the region’s American Indians as too powerful to allow for white expansion.

“Do not lounge in the cities!” commanded publisher Horace Greeley in 1841, “There is room and health in the country, away from the crowds of idlers and imbeciles. Go west, before you are fitted for no life but that of the factory.” The New York Tribune often argued that American exceptionalism required the United States to benevolently conquer the continent as the prime means of spreading both economic and political democracy. However, the vast west was not empty. Americans Indians controlled much of the land east of the Mississippi River and almost all the West. Expansion hinged on a federal policy of Indian removal.

The harassment and dispossession of American Indians – whether driven by official U.S. government policy or the actions of individual Americans and their communities – depended on manifest destiny’s belief in the divinely ordained process of putting land to its best use. Of course, a fair bit of racism was part of the equation as well. The political and legal processes of expansion always hinged on the belief that white Americans could best use new lands and opportunities. This belief rested upon the belief that only Americans embodied the democratic ideals of yeoman agriculturalism extolled by Thomas Jefferson and expanded under Jacksonian democracy. Florida was an early test case for the Americanization of new lands as the territory held strategic value for the young nation’s growing economic and military interests in the Caribbean. The most important factors that led to the annexation of Florida included anxieties over runaway slaves, Spanish neglect of the region, and the desired defeat of Native American tribes who controlled large portions of lucrative farm territory.
During the early 19th century, Spain wanted to increase productivity in Florida and encouraged migration of mostly Southern slave owners. By the second decade of the 1800s, Anglo settlers occupied plantations along the St. Johns River, from the border with Georgia to Lake George 100 miles upstream. Spain began to lose control of the sparsely European-populated Florida as the area quickly became a haven for slave smugglers bringing illicit human cargo into the U.S. for lucrative sale to Georgia planters. Plantation owners grew apprehensive about the growing numbers of slaves running to the swamps and American Indian controlled areas of Florida. American slave owners pressured the U.S. government to confront the Spanish authorities. Southern slave owners refused to quietly accept the continued presence of armed blacks in Florida. During the War of 1812, a ragtag assortment of Georgia slave owners joined by a plethora of armed opportunists seized Fernandina and raided Spanish and British-owned plantations along the St. Johns River. These private citizens received U.S. government help on July 27, 1816, when U.S. army regulars attacked the Negro Fort (established as an armed outpost during the war by the British and located about 60 miles south of the Georgia border). The raid killed 270 blacks as a result of a direct hit on the fort’s gun powder stores and set the stage for General Andrew Jackson’s invasion of Florida in 1817 and the beginning the First Seminole War.

Americans also held that Creek and Seminole Indians, occupying the area from the Apalachicola River to the wet prairies and hammock islands of central Florida, were dangers in their own right. These tribes, known to the Americans collectively as “Seminoles,” migrated into the region over the course of the 18th century and established settlements, tilled fields, and tended herds of cattle in the rich floodplains and grasslands that dominated the northern third of the Florida peninsula. Envious eyes looked upon these lands. After bitter conflict that often pitted Americans against a collection of Native Americans and former slaves, Spain eventually agreed to transfer the territory to the U.S. in exchange for $5 million and other territorial concessions as part of the Adams-Onís Treaty.

After the purchase, planters from the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia entered Florida. However, the influx of settlers into the Florida territory was temporarily halted in the mid-1830s by the outbreak of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). Free-blacks and escaped slaves also occupied the Seminole district; a situation that deeply troubled slave owners and constituted one of the major causes of the three Seminole Wars, between 1817 and 1858. Indeed, General Thomas Sidney Jesup, U.S. commander during the early stages of the Second Seminole War, labeled that conflict “a negro, not an Indian War,” fearful as he was that if the revolt, “was not speedily put down, the South will feel the effect of it on their slave population before the end of the next season.”
Florida became a state in 1845 and settlement expanded into the former Indian lands.

The Florida template – a simultaneous hope of seizing American Indians’ eastern lands, controlling slave populations, reducing lands available for runaway slaves, and killing entirely or removing the American Indian problem farther west – became more widely implemented. Presidents, since at least Thomas Jefferson, had long discussed removal, but President Andrew Jackson took the most dramatic action. Jackson believed, “It [speedy removal] will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters.” Desires to remove American Indians from valuable farmland motivated state and federal governments to cease trying to assimilate Indians and instead plan for forced removal.

Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, thereby granting the president authority to begin treaty negotiations that would give American Indians land in the West for their lands east of the Mississippi. Many advocates of removal, including President Jackson, paternalistically believed that it would protect Indian communities from outside influences that jeopardized their chances of becoming “civilized” farmers. Jackson emphasized this paternalism—the belief that the government was acting in the best interest of Native peoples— in his 1830 State of the Union Address. “It [removal] will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites…and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.”

The experience of the Cherokee was particularly brutal. Despite many tribal members adopting some Euro-American ways, including intensified agriculture, slave ownership, and Christianity; state and federal governments pressured the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee nations to sign treaties and surrender land. Many of these tribal nations used the law in hopes of preventing the seizing of their lands. Most notable among these efforts was the Cherokee Nation’s attempt to sue the state of Georgia to protect their lands.

Beginning in 1826, Georgian officials asked the federal government to negotiate with the Cherokee to secure lucrative lands. The Adams’ administration resisted the state’s request, but harassment from local settlers against the Cherokee forced the Adams and then Jackson administrations to begin serious negotiations with the Cherokees. Georgia grew impatient with the process of negotiation and abolished existing state agreements with the Cherokee that had guaranteed rights of movement and jurisdiction of tribal law. Andrew Jackson penned a letter soon after taking office that encouraged the Cherokee, among others, to voluntary relocate to the West. The discovery of gold in Georgia in the fall of 1829 further antagonized the situation.
Beginning in 1828, the Cherokee defended themselves against Georgia’s laws by citing treaties signed with the United States that guaranteed the Cherokee nation both their land and independence. The Cherokee appealed to the Supreme Court against Georgia to prevent dispossession. The Court, while sympathizing with the Cherokees’ plight, ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* - 1831). In an associated case, *Worcester v. Georgia* 1832, The Supreme Court ruled that Georgia laws did not apply within Cherokee territory. Regardless of these rulings, the state government ignored the Supreme Court and did little to prevent conflict between settlers and the Cherokee.

Jackson wanted a solution that might preserve peace and his reputation. He sent Secretary of War Lewis Cass to offer title to western lands and the promise of tribal governance in exchange for relinquishing of the Cherokee’s eastern lands. These negotiations opened a rift within the Cherokee nation that pitted John Ridge and his treaty-supporting faction against another Cherokee official, John Ross, and his Cherokee national faction – a group supportive of peace but refusing any removal treaty. The Jackson administration refused any deal that fell short of large-scale removal of the Cherokee from Georgia, thereby fueling a devastating and violent intra-tribal battle between the two factions. Eventually tensions grew to the point that several treaty advocates were assassinated by members of the national faction.

In 1835, a portion of the Cherokee Nation hoping to prevent further tribal bloodshed signed the Treaty of New Echota, ceding lands in Georgia for five million dollars and, the signatories hoped, limiting future conflicts between the Cherokee and white settlers. However, most of the tribe refused to adhere to the terms, viewing the treaty as illegitimately negotiated and signed by John Ridge. In response, John Ross pointed out the U.S. government’s hypocrisy. “You asked us to throw off the hunter and warrior state: We did so—you asked us to form a republican government: We did so. Adopting your own as our model. You asked us to cultivate the earth, and learn the mechanic arts. We did so. You asked us to learn to read. We did so. You asked us to cast away our idols and worship your god. We did so. Now you demand we cede to you our lands. That we will not do.”

President Martin van Buren, in 1838, decided to press the issue beyond negotiation and court rulings and used the New Echota Treaty provisions to order the army to forcibly remove those Cherokee not obeying the Treaty’s cession of territory. Sixteen thousand Cherokee began the journey, but harsh weather, poor planning, and difficult travel resulted in between 3,000-4,000 deaths on what became known as the Trail of Tears. Not every instance was as treacherous as the Cherokee example and some tribes resisted removal. But over 60,000 Indians were forced west by the opening of the Civil War. Indian removal also took place to a lesser degree in northern lands; the allure of manifest destiny.
encouraged expansion regardless of terrain or locale. In the Old Northwest, Odawa and Ojibwe communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, resisted removal as many lived on land north of desirable farming land. Moreover, some Ojibwe and Odawa individuals purchased land independently. They formed successful alliances with missionaries to help advocate against removal, as well as some traders and merchants who depended on trade with Native peoples. Yet, Indian removal occurred in the North as well—the “Black Hawk War” in 1832, for instance, led to the removal of many Sauk to Kansas.

Despite the disaster of removal, tribal nations slowly rebuilt their cultures and in some cases even achieved prosperity in Indian Territory. Tribal nations blended traditional cultural practices, including common land systems, with western practices including constitutional governments, common school systems, and an elite slave holding class.

The forced-migration of American Indian nations to the near West and ongoing conflicts between white settlers and those newly arrived migrants was not the only contest for power between indigenous populations and easterners. Beginning in the late eighteenth-century, the Comanche rose to power in the Southern Plains region of what is now the southwestern United States. By quickly adapting to horse culture first introduced by the Spanish, the Comanche transitioned from a foraging economy into a mixed hunting and pastoral society. While the new Mexican nation-state, after 1821, claimed the region as part of the Northern Mexican frontier, they had little control. Instead, the Comanche controlled the power and economy of the Southern Plains. A flexible political structure allowed the Comanche to dominate other Indian groups as well as Mexican and American settlers.

In the 1830s, the Comanche launched raids into northern Mexico, ending what had been an unprofitable but peaceful diplomatic relationship with Mexico. At the same time, they forged new trading relationships with Anglo-American traders in Texas. Throughout this period, the Comanche and several other independent Native groups, particularly the Kiowa, Apache, and Navajo engaged in thousands of violent encounters with Northern Mexicans. Collectively, these encounters comprised an ongoing war during the 1830s and 1840s as tribal nations vied for power and wealth. By the 1840s, Comanche power peaked with an empire that controlled a vast territory in the trans-Mississippi west known as Comancheria. By trading in Texas and raiding in Northern Mexico, the Comanche controlled the flow of commodities, including captives, livestock, and trade goods. They practiced a fluid system of captivity and captive trading, rather than a rigid chattel system. The Comanche used captives for economic exploitation but also adopted captives into kinship networks. This allowed for the assimilation of diverse peoples in the region into the empire. The ongoing conflict in the region had sweeping consequences.
on both Mexican and American politics. The U.S.-Mexican War, beginning in 1846, can be seen as a culmination of this violence.

In the Great Basin region, Mexican Independence also escalated patterns of violence. This region, on the periphery of the Spanish empire, was nonetheless integrated in the vast commercial trading network of the West. Mexican officials and Anglo-American traders entered the region with their own imperial designs. New forms of violence spread into the homelands of the Paiute and Western Shoshone as traders, settlers, and Mormon religious refugees, aided by U.S. officials and soldiers, committed daily acts of violence and laid the groundwork for violent conquest. This expansion of the American state into the Great Basin region meant groups such as the Ute, Cheyenne and Arapahoe had to compete over land, resources, captives, and trade relations with Anglo-Americans. Eventually, white incursion and ongoing

Indian Wars resulted in traumatic dispossession of land and struggle for subsistence.

The federal government attempted more than relocation of Americans Indians. Policies to “civilize” Indians coexisted along with forced removal and served an important “Americanizing” vision of expansion that brought an ever-increasing population under the American flag and sought to balance aggression with the uplift of paternal care. Thomas L. McKenney, superintendent of Indian trade from 1816 to 1822 and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1830, served as the main architect of the “civilization policy.” He asserted that American Indians were morally and intellectually equal to whites and advocated for the establishment of a national Indian school system as an extension of the factory system coupled with an embrace of American ingenuity and perseverance.

Congress rejected McKenney’s plan but instead passed the Civilization Fund Act in 1819. This act offered a $10,000 annual annuity to be allocated towards societies that funded missionaries to establish schools among Indian tribes. However, providing schooling for American Indians under the auspices of the Civilization program also allowed the federal government to further justify taking more land. Treaties, such as the 1820 Treaty of Doak’s Stand made with the Choctaw nation, often included land cessions as requirements for education provisions. Removal and Americanization reinforced Americans sense of cultural dominance.

After removal in the 1830s, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw began to collaborate with missionaries to build school systems of their own. Leaders hoped education would help ensuing generations to protect political sovereignty. In 1841, the Cherokee Nation opened a public school system that within two years included eighteen schools. By 1852, the system expanded to twenty-one schools with a national enrollment of 1,100 pupils. Many of the students educated in these tribally controlled schools later served their nations as teachers, lawyers, physicians, bureaucrats, and politicians.

III. Life and Culture in the West

The dream of creating a democratic utopia in the West ultimately rested on those who picked up their possessions and their families and moved west. Western settlers usually migrated as families and settled along navigable and potable rivers. Settlements often coalesced around local traditions, especially religion, carried from eastern settlements. These shared understandings encouraged a strong sense of cooperation among western settlers that forged communities on the frontier.

Before the Mexican War, the West for most Americans still referred to the fertile area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River with a slight amount of overspill beyond its banks. With soil exhaustion and land competition increasing in the East, most early western migrants sought a
greater measure of stability and self-sufficiency by engaging in small scale farming. Boosters of these new agricultural areas along with the U.S. government encouraged perceptions of the West as a land of hard-built opportunity that promised personal and national bounty.

Women migrants bore the unique double burden of travel while also being expected to conform to restrictive gender norms. Societal standards such as “the cult of true womanhood,” which emphasized piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness as the key virtues of women, along with the concept of “separate spheres,” which focused on the proper roles of women in the home, often accompanied men and women as they traveled west to begin their new lives. While many of these societal standards endured, there often existed an openness of frontier society that resulted in modestly more opportunities for women. Husbands needed partners in setting up a homestead and working in the field to provide food for the family. Suitable wives were often in short supply, enabling some to informally negotiate more power in their households.

Americans debated the role of government in westward expansion. This debate centered on the proper role of the U.S. government in paying for the internal improvements that soon became necessary to encourage and support economic development. Some saw frontier development as a self-driven undertaking that necessitated private risk and investment devoid of government interference. Others saw the federal government’s role as providing the infrastructural development needed to give migrants the push toward engagement with the larger national economy. In the end, federal aid proved essential for the conquest and settlement of the region.

Economic busts constantly threatened western farmers and communities. As the economy worsened after the panic of 1819, farmers were unable to pay their loans due to falling prices and over-farming. The dream of subsistence and stability abruptly ended as many migrants lost their land and felt the hand of the distant market economy forcing them even farther west to escape debt. As a result, the federal government consistently sought to increase access to land in the West, including efforts to lower the amount of land required for purchase. Smaller lots made it easier for more farmers to clear land and begin farming faster.

More than anything else, new roads and canals provided conduits for migration and settlement. Improvements in travel and exchange fueled economic growth in the 1820s and 1830s. Canal improvements expanded in the East, while road building prevailed in the West. Congress continued to allocate funds for internal improvements. Federal money pushed the National Road, begun in 1811, farther west every year. Laborers needed to construct these improvements increased employment opportunities and encouraged non-farmers to move.
to the West. Wealth promised by engagement with the new economy was hard to reject. However, roads were expensive to build and maintain and some Americans strongly opposed spending money on these improvements.

The use of steamboats grew quickly throughout the 1810s and into the 1820s. As water trade and travel grew in popularity, local and state governments along with the federal government all allocated funds for the improvement and connecting of rivers and streams. Hundreds of miles of new canals cut through the eastern landscape. The most notable of these early projects was the Erie Canal. That project, completed in 1825, linked the Great Lakes to New York City. The profitability of the canal helped New York outpace its east coast rivals to become the center for commercial import and export in the United States.

Early railroads like the Baltimore and Ohio line hoped to link mid-Atlantic cities with lucrative western trade routes. Railroads encouraged the rapid growth of towns and cities all along their routes through the encouragement of boosterism in search of speculative profits. Not only did rail lines promise to move commerce faster, but the rails also encouraged the spreading of towns farther away from traditional locations along waterways. Technological limitations, constant repairs, conflicts with American Indians, and political disagreements, all hampered railroading and kept canals and steamboats as integral parts of the transportation system. Nonetheless, this early establishment of railroads enabled a rapid expansion after the Civil War.

Economic chains of interdependence stretched over hundreds of miles of land and through thousands of contracts and remittances. America’s manifest destiny became wedded not only to territorial expansion, but also to economic development.

IV. Texas, Mexico and America

The debate over slavery became one of the prime forces behind the Texas revolution and that republic’s annexation to the United States. After gaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico hoped to attract new settlers to its northern areas in order to create a buffer between it and the expanding western populations of the United States. New immigrants, mostly from the southern United States, poured into Texas. Over the next twenty-five years, concerns over growing Anglo influence and possible American designs on Texas produced great friction between Mexican and American populations. In 1829, Mexico, hoping to quell both anger and immigration, outlawed slavery and required all new immigrants to convert to Catholicism. American immigrants, eager to expand their agricultural fortunes, largely ignored these requirements. In response, Mexican authorities closed their territory to any new immigration in 1830 – a prohibition ignored by Americans who often squatted on public lands.
In 1834, an internal conflict between federalists and centralists in the Mexican government led to the political ascendancy of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Santa Anna, governing as a dictator, repudiated the federalist Constitution of 1824, pursued a policy of authoritarian central control, and crushed several revolts throughout Mexico. Texian (as they called themselves) settlers opposed Santa Anna’s centralizing policies and met in November after issued a statement of purpose that emphasized their commitment to the Constitution of 1824 and declared Texas to be a separate state within Mexico. After the Mexican government angrily rejected the offer, Texian leaders soon abandoned their fight for the Constitution of 1824 and declared independence on March 2, 1836. The Texas Revolution of 1835-1836 was a successful secessionist movement in the northern district of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas that resulted in an independent Republic of Texas.

At the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna crushed smaller rebel forces and massacred hundreds of Texian prisoners. The Mexican army pursued the retreating Texian army deep into East Texas, spurring a mass panic and evacuation by American civilians known as the “Runaway Scrape.” The confident Santa Anna consistently failed to make adequate defensive preparations; an oversight that eventually led to a surprise attack from the outnumbered Texian army led by Sam Houston on April 21, 1836. The battle of San Jacinto lasted only eighteen minutes and resulted in a decisive victory for the Texians, who retaliated for previous Mexican atrocities by killing fleeing and surrendering Mexican soldiers for hours after the initial assault. Santa Anna was captured in the aftermath and compelled to sign the Treaty of Velasco on May 14, 1836, by which he agreed to withdraw his army from Texas and acknowledged Texas independence. Although a new Mexican government never recognized the Republic of Texas, the United States and several other nations gave the new country diplomatic recognition.

Texas annexation had remained a political land mine since the Republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836. American politicians feared that adding Texas to the Union would provoke a war with Mexico and re-ignite sectional tensions by throwing off the balance between free and slave states. However, after his expulsion from the Whig party, President John Tyler saw Texas statehood as the key to saving his political career. In 1842, he began work on opening annexation to national debate. Harnessing public outcry over the issue, Democrat James K. Polk rose from virtual obscurity to win the presidential election of 1844. Polk and his party campaigned on promises of westward expansion, with eyes toward Texas, Oregon, and California. In the final days of his presidency, Tyler at last extended an official offer to Texas on March 3, 1845. The republic accepted on July 4, becoming the twenty-eighth state.
Mexico denounced annexation as “an act of aggression, the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history.” Beyond the anger produced by annexation, perhaps the most important tangible conflict between Mexico and the United States, at this point, was a narrow strip of land to which both countries now laid claim. Mexico drew the southwestern border of Texas at the Nueces River, but Texans claimed that the border lay roughly 150 miles further west at the Rio Grande. Neither claim was realistic since the sparsely populated area, known as the Nueces strip, was in fact controlled by independent American Indian tribes.

In November of 1845, President Polk secretly dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City in order to attempt a purchase of the Nueces strip along with large sections of New Mexico and California. The mission was an empty gesture, designed largely to pacify those in Washington who insisted on diplomacy before war. Predictably, officials in Mexico City refused to receive Slidell. In preparation for the assumed failure of the negotiations, Polk preemptively sent a 4,000 man army under General Zachary Taylor to Corpus Christi, Texas, just northeast of the Nueces River. Upon word of Slidell’s rebuff in January 1846, Polk ordered Taylor to cross into the disputed territory. The President hoped that this show of force would push the lands of California onto the bargaining table as well. Unfortunately, he badly misread the situation. After losing Texas, the Mexican public strongly opposed surrendering any more ground to the United States. Popular opinion left the shaky government in Mexico City without room to negotiate. On April 24, Mexican cavalrymen attacked a detachment of Taylor’s troops in the disputed territory just north of the Rio Grande, killing eleven U.S. soldiers.

It took two weeks for the news to reach Washington. Polk sent a message to Congress on May 11 that summed up the assumptions and intentions of the United States.

Instead of this, however, we have been exerting our best efforts to propitiate her good will. Upon the pretext that Texas, a nation as independent as herself, thought proper to unite its destinies with our own, she has affected to believe that we have severed her rightful territory, and in official proclamations and manifestos has repeatedly threatened to make war upon us for the purpose of reconquering Texas. In the meantime we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted even before the recent information from the frontier of the Del Norte. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war. James Knox Polk
The cagey Polk knew that since hostilities already existed, political dissent would be dangerous – a vote against war became a vote against supporting American soldiers under fire. Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13. Only a few members of both parties, notably John Quincy Adams and John C. Calhoun, voted against the measure. Upon declaring war in 1846, Congress issued a call for 50,000 volunteer soldiers. Spurred by promises of adventure and conquest abroad, thousands of eager men flocked to assembly points across the country. However, opposition to “Mr. Polk’s War” soon grew.

In the early fall of 1846, the U.S. Army invaded Mexico on multiple fronts and within a year’s time General Winfield Scott’s men took control of Mexico City. However, the city’s fall did not bring an end to the war. Scott’s men occupied Mexico’s capital for over four months while the two countries negotiated. In the United States, the war had been controversial from the beginning. Embedded journalists sent back detailed reports from the front lines, and a divided press viciously debated the news. Volunteers found that war was not as they expected. Disease killed seven times as many American soldiers as combat. Harsh discipline, conflict within the ranks, and violent clashes with civilians led soldiers to desert in huge numbers. Peace finally came on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The new American Southwest attracted a diverse group of entrepreneurs and settlers to the commercial towns of New Mexico, the fertile lands of eastern Texas, and the famed gold deposits of California and the Rocky Mountain chains. This postwar migration built upon migration to the region dating back to the 1820s, when the lucrative Santa Fe trade enticed merchants to New Mexico and generous land grants brought numerous settlers to Texas. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 further added to American gains north of Mexico.

The U.S.-Mexican War had an enormous impact on both countries. The American victory helped set the United States on the path to becoming a world power, elevated Zachary Taylor to the presidency, and served as a training ground for many of the Civil War’s future commanders. Most significantly, however, Mexico lost roughly half of its territory. Yet, the United States’ victory was not without danger. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an outspoken critic, predicted ominously at the beginning of the conflict, “We will conquer Mex-
ico, but it will be as the man who swallows the arsenic which will bring him down in turn. Mexico will poison us.” Indeed, the conflict over whether or not to extend slavery into the newly won territory pushed the nation ever closer to disunion and civil war.

**V. Manifest Destiny and the Gold Rush**

California, belonging to Mexico prior to the war, was at least three arduous months travel from the nearest American settlements. There was some sparse settlement in the Sacramento valley and missionaries made the trip occasionally. The fertile farmland of Oregon, like the black dirt lands of the Mississippi valley, attracted more settlers than California. Dramatized stories of Indian attack filled migrants with a sense of foreboding, although the majority of settlers encountered no violence and often no American Indians at all. The slow progress, disease, human and oxen starvation, poor trails, terrible geographic preparations, lack of guidebooks, threatening wildlife, vagaries of weather, and general confusion were all more formidable and frequent than American Indian attacks. Despite the harshness of the journey, by 1848 there were approximated 20,000 Americans living west of the Rockies, with about three-fourths of that number in Oregon.

Many who moved nurtured a romantic vision of life, attracting more Americans who sought more than agricultural challenges and familial responsibilities.

The rugged individualism and military prowess of the West, encapsulated for some by service in the Mexican war, drew a growing new breed west of the Sierra Nevada to meet with the Californians already there; a breed of migrants different from the modest agricultural communities of the near-west.

If the great draw of the West stood as manifest destiny’s kindling then the discovery of gold in California was the spark the set that fire ablaze. The vast majority western settlers sought land ownership, but the lure of getting rich quick drew younger single male participants (with some women) to gold towns throughout the West. These adventurers and fortune-seekers then served as magnets for the arrival of others providing services associated with the gold rush. Towns and cities grew rapidly throughout the West, notably San Francisco whose population grew from about 500 in 1848 to almost...
50,000 by 1853. Lawlessness, predictable failure of most fortune seekers, conflicts with native populations of the area – including Mexican, Spanish, American Indian, Chinese, and Japanese populations – and the explosion of the slavery question all demonstrated the danger of manifest destiny’s promise.

On January 24, 1848 James W. Marshall, a contractor hired by John Sutter, discovered gold on Sutter’s sawmill land in the Sacramento valley area, of the then territory, of California. Throughout the 1850s, Californians beseeched Congress for a transcontinental railroad to provide service for both passengers and goods from the Midwest and the East Coast. The potential economic benefits for communities along proposed railroads made the debate over the railroad’s route rancorous. Growing dissent over the slavery issue also heightened tensions. For their part, the economic boom ushered in by the gold rush allowed the state government of California to begin work on a state rail system in the Sacramento Valley in 1854.

The great influx of diverse people clashed in a combative and aggrandizing atmosphere of individualistic pursuit of fortune. Linguistic, cultural, economic, and racial conflict roiled both urban and rural areas. By the end of the 1850s, Chinese and Mexican immigrants made up 1/5th of the mining population in California. The ethnic patchwork of these frontier towns belied a clearly defined socio-economic arrangement that saw whites on top as landowners and managers with poor whites and ethnic minorities working the mines and assorted jobs. The competition for land, resources, and riches furthered individual and collective abuses particularly against American Indians and older Mexican communities. California’s towns, as well as those dotting the landscape throughout the West, such as Coeur D’Alene in Idaho and Tombstone in Arizona, struggled to balance security with economic development and the protection of civil rights and liberties.

VI. The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny

The expansion of influence and territory off the continent became an important corollary to westward expansion. One of the main goals of the U.S. government was the prevention of outside involvement of European countries in the affairs of the western hemisphere. Therefore, American policymakers sought an outlet for the domestic assertions of manifest destiny in the nation’s early foreign policy decisions of the antebellum period.

As Secretary of State for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams held the responsibility for the satisfactory resolution of ongoing border disputes in different areas of North America between the United States, England, Spain, and Russia. Adams’ view of American foreign policy was put into clearest practice in the Monroe Doctrine, which he had great influence in crafting.

Increasingly aggressive incursions from Russians in
the Northwest, ongoing border disputes with the British in Canada, the remote possibility of Spanish reconquest of South America, and British abolitionism in the Caribbean all forced a U.S. response. Despite the philosophical confidence present in the Monroe administration’s decree, the reality of limited military power kept the Monroe Doctrine as an aspirational assertion. In a speech before the U.S. House of Representatives on July 4th, 1821, Secretary of State Adams acknowledged the American need for a robust foreign policy that simultaneously protected and encouraged the nation’s growing and increasingly dynamic economy.

America...in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining her own...She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all...She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet on her brows would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of freedom and independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an imperial diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might become the dictatrix of the world; she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit. . . . Her glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield: but the motto upon her shield is, Freedom, Independence, Peace. This has been her Declaration: this has been, as far as her necessary intercourse with the rest of mankind would permit, her practice. John Quincy Adams

Adams’ great fear was not territorial loss. He had no doubt that Russian and British interests in North America could be arrested. Adams held no reason to antagonize the Russians with grand pronouncements nor was he generally called upon to do so. He enjoyed a good relationship with the Russian Ambassador and stewarded through Congress most-favored trade status for the Russians in 1824. Rather, Adams worried gravely about the ability of the United States to compete commercially with the British in Latin America and the Caribbean. This concern deepened with the valid concern that America’s chief Latin American trading partner, Cuba, dangled perilously close to outstretched British claws. Cabinet debates surrounding establishment of the Monroe Doctrine and geopolitical events in the Caribbean focused attention on that part of the world as key to the future defense of U.S. military and commercial interests; the main threat to those interests being the British. Expansion of economic opportunity and protection from foreign pressures became the overriding goals of U.S. foreign policy.

Bitter disagreements over the expansion of slavery
into what became the Mexican Cession territory began even before the Mexican War ended. Many Northern businessmen and Southern slave owners supported the idea of expansion of American power and slavery into the Caribbean as a useful alternative to continental expansion, since slavery already existed in these areas. While some were critical of these attempts, seeing them as evidence of a growing slave-power conspiracy, many supported attempts at expansion, like those previous seen in East Florida, even if these attempts were of an extra-legal variety. Filibustering, as it was called, was privately financed schemes of varying degrees of operational reality directed at capturing and occupying foreign territory without the approval of the U.S. government.

Filibustering adventures took greatest hold in the imagination of Americans as they looked toward Cuba. Fears of racialized revolution in Cuba (as in Haiti and Florida before it) as well as the presence of an aggressive British abolitionary influence in the Caribbean energized the movement to annex Cuba and encouraged filibustering as expedient alternatives to lethargic official negotiations. Despite filibustering’s seemingly chaotic planning and destabilizing repercussions, those intellectually and economically guiding the effort saw in their efforts a willing and receptive Cuban population and an agreeable American business class. In Cuba, manifest destiny for the first time sought territory off the continent and hoped to put a unique spin on the story of success in Mexico. Yet, the annexation of Cuba, despite great popularity and some military attempts led by Narciso Lopez, a Cuban dissident, never succeeded.

Other filibustering expeditions were launched elsewhere, including two by William Walker, a former American soldier. Walker seized portions of the Baja peninsula in Mexico and then later took power and established a slaving regime in Nicaragua. Eventually Walker was executed in Honduras. These missions violated the laws of the United States, but wealthy Americans financed various filibusters and less-wealthy adventurers were all too happy to sign up. Filibustering enjoyed its brief popularity into the late 1850s, at which point slavery and concerns over session came to the fore. By the opening of the Civil War most saw these attempts as simply territorial theft and muscular articulations of individual desires toward profit and dominance.

VII. Conclusion

Debates over expansion, economics, diplomacy, and manifest destiny exposed some of the weaknesses of the American system. Despite a perceived American chauvinism in policies of Native American removal, the Mexican War, and filibustering, the bombast of the period belied a growing anxiety. Manifest destiny attempted to make a virtue of America’s lack of history and turn it into the very a basis of nationhood. To locate such origins, John O’Sullivan and other champions of manifest destiny grafted biological
and territorial imperatives – common among European definitions of nationalism – onto American political culture. The United States was the embodiment of the democratic ideal, they said. Democracy had to be timeless, boundless, and portable. New methods of transportation and communication, the rapidity of the railroad and the telegraph, the rise of the international market economy, and the growth of the American frontier provided shared platforms to help Americans think across local identities and reaffirm a national character.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
## UNIT 7
### TIMELINE

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Slavery & Southern Society

The character of the South was rural-agrarian, with an emphasis on the growth and sale of cash crops. To do this, plantation owners used slaves to obtain the greatest amount of agricultural labor for the least financial investment. After the American Revolution the significance of slave labor and the cotton “grew” in importance to southern culture. The cotton gin, invented by Eli Whitney in 1793, separated the seed of the plant from the fibers. At first it seemed that this fact would decrease the need for labor, however it did not. Instead, it meant that more cotton could be harvested and processed, before the cotton spoiled. Thus, planters desired more slave labor to accomplish this task. The cotton gin was the only major technological advancement in which Southerners invested their money. Southerners did not diversify their economy, as Northerners did. In particular, cotton became more important to the southern economy, due to the demand created by the British and New England textile industries. Thus, there was a large and profitable market for southern, slave-produced cotton.

With the boom in cotton, plantation owners invested more of their profits into the purchase of slaves for labor. Economically, this emphasis on slave labor was an inherent weakness in the South’s economy. The approximately four million slaves were not only non-consumers on the free market, but since slavery did not allow for the natural intelligence and talents of these people to thrive in southern society, they also were under-valued in terms of their productivity as human beings. The result of the primary investment in slave labor meant that the cost per slave increased. The domestic slave trade boomed, especially after the legalized end of the international slave trade by Congress in 1808. After that time, a “new” domestic profession emerged: the “slave trader.” Slave traders were brokers or distributors of human beings for a profit. By 1850, there were over 50 slave traders in Charleston, South Carolina and over 100 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The domestic slave production was centered in the northern part of the South, and slaves raised on breeding plantations usually were “sold down the river” to the large plantations of the deep South.

From this, it follows economically that in order to make slavery profitable, planters had to have a certain level of income. Therefore, ownership of slaves by southern whites was very much tied to wealth. To own a slave was a symbol of financial prosperity. Yet by the same token, whites lived in constant fear and outright paranoia of slave rebellions. Due to those fears, states passed laws regulating the slave population and masters. Laws varied from state to state, but some examples were that slaves could not: own property, assemble, carry weapons, testify in court against whites, be out after dark, or marry. Masters also had laws applying to them. They could not teach slaves to read or write and had to issue passes to slaves leaving their immediate control. Masters could not be prosecuted for killing a slave during the act of
punishment. Any and all suspected slave rebellions were suppressed, and the leaders were beaten and/or executed as examples.

Since the Colonial Era, Southerners became increasingly hostile in their defense of the institution of slavery. In the colonial period, they were somewhat apologetic of slave labor as being a “necessary evil,” but as time went on they defended the “peculiar institution,” as it was called, with great vigor. Southerners relied on the Bible to justify their actions, and they reasoned that they were being humanitarian to “less-er” peoples unable otherwise to take care of themselves. (Note: Southerners maintained this argument despite the obvious contradiction of the successful free blacks living in American society at the time.) Southerners also argued that slave laborers were better off being taken care of by planters than were the free laborers of the North, who had no one to help them in hard times and who worked/lived in horrible conditions.

The southern defense of slavery became so ingrained in southern culture that eventually the South tried to seal itself off from the rest of the world and the nation in order to avoid having to defend the practice from critics at home and abroad. Ultimately, some Southerners chose disunion versus giving up or further defending their preference for slave labor. Interestingly, as part of their culture, the planter classes had an informal “code of ethics,” regarding how they (ideally) were supposed to treat their slaves. Owners commonly believed that harsh physical punishments might encourage slave rebellions. Thus planters were (in theory) to treat their slaves kindly, being “light on the whip.” Peer pressure amongst the planter classes led some owners to hide the truth regarding the extent of physical beatings slaves received on their plantations. Owners also kept an eye on the activities of the overseers who, perhaps due to their lowly positions in southern society, were of the most violent toward the slaves. Overseers who used excessive abuse, depending on the owner, might be reprimanded, docked pay, or fired from their jobs.

Of course, the actual treatment of slaves was far from what the planter’s “code of ethics” idealized it to be. Slaves were the property of owners, and thus they were constantly at the master’s will and the overseers. Some masters were “kinder” than others, and amongst the slave communities masters’ with such reputations spread. At a slave auction, it was not uncommon to find slaves faking illness or being rude to prospective masters in hope that the ones noted for being heavy on the whip would not buy them. When kinder masters examined them, often the opposite was true.

Overview of Conditions Slaves Faced

Shelter, Clothing, and Food:
Slaves were malnourished. They had a high calorie diet with low nutrition. Some slaves were allowed to
keep gardens, but only after they finished the master’s work. Some slaves fished and trapped, giving a source of dietary protein. Clothing was plain, simple, uncomfortable, and generally inadequate. Many slaves were not given shoes and blankets until the winter months, if at all. Living quarters were small, with dirt floors, poor locations, unsanitary, crowded with more than one family, bug infested, and disease-bearing areas.

Types of Slaves:
The general types of slaves are classified as: field, household, and urban. Work was harder than any person today even could begin to fathom.

- Field Slaves: Work in the fields was from sunrise to sunset, grueling, and with little time for rest. The hardest plantation work was in the fields, and the most labor-intense work was cotton production. Rice cultivation and livestock raising was less labor-intensive. Some slaves either for reward or punishment (depending on the situation) also served as overseers.

- Household Slaves and Urban slaves had different lifestyles and work requirements than field slaves. Household slaves were on call 24 hours, had no privacy, were culturally separated from the slave community, were given better food and clothing (since they were seen publicly), and the females always were vulnerable to sexual assaults.

- Urban slaves: were hired out, could travel around the city (making running away easier), had more privacy, could mingle with different people, could pretend they were free blacks, and usually were trained with a skill that had some value in the market place. There were rare examples of urban slaves who were allowed to work for themselves and use a portion of their earnings to save enough money to eventually buy their own freedom.

Punishments:
Physical and mental abuse of slaves was a constant feature of southern life. The most feared weapon was the whip, and masters were judged as being “good” or “bad” by how much they used it. Sexual abuse and rape were commonplace. The result of such relations were mulatto children, who usually were rejected by their white fathers and kept enslaved in some capacity or another. (A person’s status -free or slave- was determined via the mother’s race.) These children were more readily accepted into the slave community, but often they were rejected by other blacks because of who their fathers were.

Slave Hierarchy:
A slave hierarchy existed on many plantations. Slaves were resentful of others in “better” positions. Some slaves tried to move up in the hierarchy into “better” positions by gaining the favor of the overseers and masters.
Rebellion and Adaptation:
Rebellion came in a variety of forms. The least common was organized, violent rebellion. Some famous rebellions of the era were: Gabriel Prosser’s in Virginia around 1800 and Nat Turner’s in Virginia around 1831. Others occurred, but these two were very famous at the time. In both cases, the rebellions failed, the leaders were executed, and southern paranoia about slave rebellions increased in their aftermath. Most resistance was non-violent. For slaves it was difficult to get weapons, to know where to run-away to (hence the development of the underground railroad), and to have enough strong, young, males slaves to keep a rebellion going. Thus, other forms of resistance emerged. Most were designed to hurt the planter economically, while obtaining some personal relief for the slaves from their daily horrors. These forms of rebellion included: running away, laying-out (refusing to work for a few days by finding a remote area on the plantation at which to rest in private), conducting work slow-downs, stealing food and selling it to free blacks, faking illness, and destroying equipment. In the worst cases, slaves killed their children, mutilate themselves (in order to be given different work), and commit suicide. There also were cases of slaves poisoning their masters and mixing finely ground glass into breads and meats in order to slowly kill the masters consuming these foods.

Adaptation was what most slaves did to survive. Slaves used culture, religion, faith, and music. Despite the physical and mental abuse, their intellectual independence and creativity revealed itself in the slave culture. The internal strength of these individuals led to the development of a unique slave culture that preserved elements of African heritage. Oral history telling, dancing, drumming for communication, voodoo, and dying clothing bright colors were examples.

Family:
Family life was very important in slave culture, and marriage was recognized within the slave community, despite it being illegal in white society. Extended families were embraced due to death and the splitting up of families. Strong emotional ties existed between spouses and with children. Families actively sought to preserve their family heritage through the use of family names and oral histories passed from generation to generation. Fathers were respected highly, and women worked in groups, as much as possible, for child care and for emotional purposes. All of this ran counter to the stereotypes that whites created to justify and oppress blacks.

White Culture & White Social “Class” Culture
The social-economic gap between poor whites (Hill and Pineywoods folks) and wealthy whites (Piedmont and Tidewater folks) was very large. And the distinguishing “class” difference between them was the ownership (or lack thereof) of slaves for labor. The three-leveled class structure of the industrialized
North (upper, middle, and lower classes) did not develop in the South, and essentially there were only two “classes” (for lack of a better word) of whites in the South: the rich and the poor. The general classifications of southern whites were:

- The **Hill folk** who were located in the Appalachian Mountains and the Ozark Plateau (i.e. Tennessee, West Virginia, and Arkansas) on areas with poor soil. They lived at the subsistence level agriculturally, did not own slaves for labor, and politically resented the power and culture of the planter (slave-owning) whites. They were considered a lowly and had little political representation.

- The **Pineywoods folk** were located in the eastern parts of North Carolina and areas of Mississippi in regions with lower soil qualities. They were the class of people stereotyped as the “poor whites” of the South. They primarily relied on subsistence agriculture for survival, but they sold some small amounts of food crops to the planter classes. Slave ownership amongst these people was very low.

- The **Piedmont folk** were politically, socially, economically, and biologically linked to the planter classes of the tidewater region. These individuals aspired to become wealthier and to become part of the upper levels of the planter class. They lived on the fertile, inland soils of the South and raised cash crops like cotton and tobacco, along with foods for sale and for their own consumption. Politically, they supported the upper planter classes. They aspired to be, if they were not already, owners of slaves for labor.

- The **Tidewater folk** were the planter aristocracy of the South. These individuals were the upper 2% of the southern slave-holding population and were politically dominant & powerful. They owned the majority of slaves for labor, and living on the richest soils of the tidewater South, they produced large staple crops for domestic and international markets.

Overall, there were on average 2,100,000 whites in the South in the antebellum era. 350,000 of these whites owned slaves, which was 12% of the population. Around 2% of that 12% owned the largest plantations. Less than 1/3 of the total white population in the South owned slaves, with the majority of the slaves being owned by the upper 2% of southern whites. Yet still, the average poor, white male in the South supported not only the institution of slavery but fought for the South in the Civil War to preserve the southern way of life. The reason for this was found in the ideas they held related to racial superiority. Southern whites embraced what historians have labeled as “Herrenvolk Democracy,” which is the concept that states that all members of the “master race,” regardless of economic class, are superior to anyone not of that race. This concept, as applied to the antebellum South, meant that despite the low economic position of poor whites slaves, as the lowest of laborers,
provided these same whites with a degree of legal and social superiority. This dynamic was in contrast to the poorer classes in the North (such as the Irish) who were considered the lowliest in northern society, in part due to the fact that free blacks and other races were not as numerous there.

Another important aspect about Southern culture was that, because of the use of slave labor, the inherent value placed on hard work (by whites) was very weak. Since wealth was built on the backs of slaves, Southern whites did not see hard work as a way to get ahead in life, but rather as a demeaning fact of life. The ultimate goal of work for whites in Southern society was to get to a point whereby slaves could be purchased and a life of leisure (which was valued highly) could be obtained. Northern society contrasted in attitudes toward hard work, due to it valuing and supporting a free labor system.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*
I. Introduction

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the Southern states experienced extraordinary change that would define the region and its role in American history for decades, even centuries, to come. Between the 1830s and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the American South expanded its wealth and population and became an integral part of an increasingly global economy. It did not, as previous generations of histories have told, sit back on its cultural and social traditions and insulate itself from an expanding system of communication, trade, and production that connected Europe and Asia to the Americas. Quite the opposite, the South actively engaged new technologies and trade routes while also seeking to assimilate and upgrade its most “traditional” and culturally engrained practices—such as slavery and agricultural production—within a modernizing world.

Beginning in the 1830s, merchants from the Northeast, Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean flocked to Southern cities, setting up trading firms, warehouses, ports, and markets. As a result, these cities—like Richmond, Charleston, St. Louis, Mobile, Savannah, and New Orleans, to name a few—doubled, and even tripled, in size and global importance. Populations became more cosmopolitan, more educat-
ed, and wealthier. Systems of class—lower-, middle-, and upper-class communities—developed where they had never clearly existed. Ports that had once focused entirely on the importation of slaves, and shipped only regionally, became homes to daily and weekly shipping lines to New York City, Liverpool, Manchester, Le Havre, and Lisbon. The world was, slowly but surely, coming closer together; and the South was right in the middle.

II. The Importance of Cotton

In November of 1785, the Liverpool firm of Peel, Yates, & Co. imported the first seven bales of American cotton ever to arrive in Europe. Prior to this unscheduled, and frankly unwanted, delivery, European merchants saw cotton as a product of the colonial Caribbean islands of Barbados, Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), Martinique, Cuba, and Jamaica. The American South, though relatively wide and expansive, was the go-to source for rice and, most importantly, tobacco. Few knew that the seven bales sitting in Liverpool that winter of 1785 would change the world. But they did. By the early 1800s, the American South had developed a niche in the European market for “luxurious” long-staple cotton grown exclusively on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. But this was only the beginning of a massive flood to come, and the foundation of the South’s astronomical rise to global prominence. Before long, botanists, merchants, and planters alike set out to develop strains of cotton seed that would grow further west on the Southern mainland, especially in the new lands opened up by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803—an area that stretched from New Orleans in South to what is today Minnesota, parts of the Dakotas, and Montana.

The discovery of *Gossypium barbadense*—often called “Petit Gulf” cotton—near Rodney, Mississippi, in 1820 changed the American and global cotton markets forever. “Petit Gulf,” it was said, slid through the cotton gin—a machine developed by Eli Whitney in 1794 for deseeding cotton—more easily than any other strain. It also grew tightly, producing more usable cotton than anyone had imagined to that point. Perhaps most importantly, though, it came up at a time when land in the Southwest—southern Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and northern Louisiana—became readily available for anyone with a few dollars and big dreams. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the federal government implemented several forced migrations of Native Americans, establishing a system of reservations west of the Mississippi River upon which all eastern peoples were required to relocate and settle. This, enacted through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, allowed the federal government to survey, divide, and auction off millions of acres of land for however much bidders were willing to pay. Suddenly, farmers with dreams of owning a large plantation could purchase dozens, even hundreds, of acres in the fertile Mississippi River Delta for cents on the dollar. Pieces of land that in other, more
developed places would cost thousands of dollars sold in the 1830s for several hundred, at prices as low as 40¢ per acre.

Thousands of people, each one with his or her own dream of massive and immediate success, rushed to the area quickly becoming known as the “Cotton Belt.” Joseph Holt Ingraham, a writer and traveler from Maine, called it “mania.” William Henry Sparks, a lawyer living in Natchez, Mississippi, remembered it as “a new El Dorado” in which “fortunes were made in a day, without enterprise or work.” The change was astonishing. “Where yesterday the wilderness darkened over the land with her wild forests,” he recalled, “to-day the cotton plantations whitened the earth.” Money flowed from banks, many newly formed, on promises of “other-worldly” profits and overnight returns. Banks in New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and even London offered lines of credit to anyone looking to buy land in the Southwest. Some even sent their own agents to purchase cheap land at auction for the express purpose of selling it, sometimes the very next day, at double and triple the original value—a process known as “speculation.”

The explosion of available land in the fertile cotton belt brought new life to the South. By the end of the 1830s, “Petit Gulf” cotton had been perfected, distributed, and planted throughout the region. Advances in steam power and water travel revolutionized Southern farmers’ and planters’ ability to deseed, bundle, and move their products to ports popping up along the Atlantic seaboard. Indeed, by the end of the 1830s, cotton had become the primary crop not only of the Southwestern states, but of the entire nation.

The numbers were staggering. In 1793, just a few years after the first, albeit unintentional, shipment of American cotton to Europe, the South produced around five million pounds of cotton, again almost
exclusively the product of South Carolina’s Sea Islands. Seven years later, in 1800, South Carolina remained the primary cotton producer in the South, sending 6.5 million pounds of the luxurious long-staple blend to markets in Charleston, Liverpool, London, and New York. But as the tighter, more abundant and vibrant “Petit Gulf” strain moved west with the dreamers, schemers, and speculators, the American South quickly became the world’s leading cotton producer. By 1835, the five main cotton-growing states—South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—produced more than 500 million pounds of “Petit Gulf” for a global market stretching from New Orleans to New York to London, Liverpool, Paris and beyond. That 500 million pounds of cotton made up nearly 55 percent of the entire United States export market, a trend that continued nearly every year until the outbreak of the Civil War. Indeed, the two billion pounds of cotton produced in 1860 alone amounted to more than 60 percent of the United States’ total exports for that year.

The astronomical rise of American cotton production came at the cost of the South’s first staple crop—tobacco. Perfected in Virginia, but grown and sold in nearly every Southern territory and state, tobacco served as the South’s main economic commodity for more than a century. But tobacco was a rough crop. It treated the land poorly, sucking up nutrients at a rate with which the soil could not compete. Tobacco fields did not last forever. In fact, fields rarely survived more than four or five cycles of growth, which left them dried and barren, incapable of growing much more than patches of grass. Of course, tobacco is, and was, an addictive substance; but because of its violent pattern of growth, farmers had to move around, purchasing new lands, developing new methods of production, and even creating new fields through deforestation and westward expansion. Tobacco, then, was expensive to produce—and not only because of the ubiquitous use of slave labor. It required massive, temporary fields, large numbers of slaves and laborers, and constant movement.

Cotton was different, and it arrived at a time best suited for its success. “Petit Gulf” cotton, in particular, grew relatively quickly on cheap, widely available land. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1794, and the emergence of steam power three decades later, cotton became the average man’s commodity, the product with which the United States could expand westward, producing and reproducing Thomas Jefferson’s idyllic yeoman republic—a nation in control.
of its land, reaping the benefits of honest, free, and self-reliant work, a nation of families and farmers, expansion and settlement. But this all came at a violent cost. With the democratization of land ownership through Indian Removal, federal auctions, readily available credit, and the seemingly universal dream of cotton’s immediate profit, one of the South’s lasting “traditions” became normalized and engrained. And by the 1860s, that very “tradition,” seen as the backbone of Southern society and culture, would split the nation in two. The heyday of American slavery had arrived.

III. Cotton & Slavery

The rise of cotton, and the resulting upsurge in the United States’ global position, wed the South to slavery. Without slavery there could be no “Cotton Kingdom,” no massive production of raw materials stretching across thousands of acres worth millions of dollars, and employing, at different stages of the process, many hundreds of people. Indeed, cotton grew alongside slavery. The two moved hand-in-hand. The existence of slavery, and the absolute reliance the Southern economy came to have on the practice, became the defining factor in what would be known as the “Slave South.” Although slavery arrived in the Americas long before cotton became a profitable commodity, the use and purchase of slaves, the moralistic and economic justifications for the continuation of slavery, even the urgency to protect the practice from extinction before the Civil War all received new life from the rise of cotton and the economic, social, and culture growth spurt that accompanied its success.

Slavery had existed in the South since at least 1619, when a group of Dutch traders arrived at Jamestown with 20 Africans. Although these Africans remained under the ambiguous legal status of “unfree,” rather than actual slaves, their arrival set in motion a practice that would stretch across the entire continent over the next two centuries. Slavery was everywhere by the time the American Revolution created the United States, although Northern states began a process of gradually abolishing the practice soon thereafter. In the more rural, agrarian South, slavery became a way of life, especially as farmers expanded...
their lands, planted more crops, and entered into the international trade market. By 1790, four years after the ratification of the Constitution, 654,121 slaves lived in the South—then just Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and the “Southwest Territory” (now Tennessee). Just twenty years later, in 1810, that number had increased to more than 1.1 million individuals in bondage.

The massive change in the South’s enslaved population between 1790 and 1810 makes sense, though. During that time, the South went from a region of four states and one rather small territory to a region of six states (Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee) and three rather large territories (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Orleans). The free population of the South also nearly doubled over that period—from around 1.3 million in 1790 to more than 2.3 million in 1810. It is important to note here that the enslaved population of the South did not increase at any rapid rate over the next two decades, until the cotton boom took hold in the mid-1830s. Indeed, following the constitutional ban on the international slave trade in 1808, the number of slaves in the South increased by just 750,000 in twenty years.

But then cotton came, and grew, and changed everything. Over the course of the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, slavery became so endemic to the “Cotton Belt” that travelers, writers, and statisticians began referring to the area as the “Black Belt,” not only to describe the color of the rich land, but also to describe the skin color of those forced to work its fields, line its docks, and move the products of others’ lands.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Southern slavery during this so-called “Cotton Revolution” was the value placed upon both the work and the body of the slaves themselves. Once the fever of the initial land rush subsided, land values became more static, and credit less free flowing. For Mississippi land that in 1835 cost no more than $600, a farmer or investor would have to shell out more than $3,000 in 1850. By 1860, that same land, depending on its record of production and location, could cost as much as $100,000. In many cases, cotton growers, especially planters with large lots and enslaved workforces, put up slaves as collateral for funds dedicated to buying more land. If that land, for one reason or another, be it weevils, a late freeze, or a simple lack of nutrients, did not produce a viable crop within a year, the

Though taken after the end of slavery, these stereographs show various stages of cotton production. The fluffy white staple fiber is first extracted from the boll (a prickly, sharp protective capsule), after which the seed is separated in the ginning and taken to a storehouse. Unknown, Picking cotton in a great plantation in North Carolina, U.S.A., c. 1865-1903. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Picking_cotton_in_a_great_plantation_in_North_Carolina__U.S.A._from_Robert_N._Dennis_collection_of_stereoscopic_views_2.png.
planter would lose not only the new land, but also the slaves he or she put up as a guarantee of payment.

So much went into the production of cotton, the expansion of land, and maintenance of enslaved workforces that by the 1850s, nearly every ounce of credit offered by Southern, and even Northern, banks dealt directly with some aspect of the cotton market. And millions of dollars changed hands. Slaves, the literal and figurative backbones of the Southern cotton economy, served as the highest and most important expense for any successful cotton grower. Prices for slaves varied drastically, depending on skin color, sex, age, and location, both of purchase and birth. In Virginia in the 1820s, for example, a single female slave of childbearing years sold for an average of $300; an unskilled man above the age of 18 sold for around $450; and boys and girls below 13 years sold for between $100 and $150.

By the 1840s, and into the 1850s, prices had nearly doubled—a result of both standard inflation and the increasing importance of enslaved laborers in the cotton market. In 1845, “plow boys” under the age of 18 sold for more than $600 in some areas, measured at “five or six dollars per pound.” “Prime field hands,” as they were called by merchants and traders, averaged $1,600 at market by 1850, a figure that fell in line with the rising prices of the cotton they picked. For example, when cotton sat at 7¢ per pound in 1838, the average “field hand” cost around $700. As the price of cotton increased to 9¢, 10¢, then 11¢ per pound over the next ten years, the average cost of an enslaved male laborer likewise rose to $775, $900, and then more than $1,600.

The key is that cotton and slaves helped define each other, at least in the cotton South. By the 1850s, slavery and cotton had become so intertwined, that the very idea of change—be it crop diversity, anti-slavery ideologies, economic diversification, or the increasingly staggering cost of purchasing and maintaining slaves—became anathema to the Southern economic and cultural identity. Cotton had become the foundation of the Southern economy. Indeed, it was the only major product, besides
perhaps sugar cane in Louisiana, that the South
could effectively market internationally. As a result,
Southern planters, politicians, merchants, and traders
became more and more dedicated—some would say
“obsessed”—to the means of its production: slaves
and slavery. In 1834, Joseph Ingraham wrote that
“to sell cotton in order to buy negroes—to make
more cotton to buy more negroes, ‘ad infinitum,’ is
the aim and direct tendency of all the operations of
the thorough going cotton planter; his whole soul
is wrapped up in the pursuit.” Twenty-three years
later, such pursuit had taken on a seemingly religious
character, as James Stirling, an Englishman traveling
through the South, observed, “[slaves] and cotton—
cotton and [slaves]; these are the law and the prophets
to the men of the South.”

The Cotton Revolution was a time of capitalism,
panic, stress, and competition. Planters expanded
their lands, purchased slaves, extended lines of credit,
and went into massive amounts of debt because they
were constantly working against the next guy, the
newcomer, the social mover, the speculator, the trader.
A single bad crop could cost even most wealthy,
landed planter his or her entire life, along with those
of his or her slaves and their families. Although the
cotton market was large and profitable, it was also
fickle, risky, and cost intensive. The more wealth one
 gained, the more land he or she needed to procure,
which led to more slaves, more credit, and more
mouths to feed. The decades before the Civil War
in the South, then, were not times of slow, simple
tradition. They were times of high competition, high
risk, and high reward, no matter where one stood
in the social hierarchy. But the risk was not always
economic in nature.

The most tragic, indeed horrifying, aspect of slavery
was its inhumanity. All slaves had memories,
emotions, experiences, and thoughts. They saw
their experiences in full color, felt the pain of the
lash, the heat of the sun, and the heartbreak of loss,
whether through death, betrayal, or sale. Communities
developed upon a shared sense of suffering, common
work, and even family ties. Slaves communicated
in the slave markets of the urban South, and worked
together to help their families, ease their loads, or
simply frustrate their owners. Simple actions of
resistance, such as breaking a hoe, running a wagon
off the road, causing a delay in production due to
injury, running away, or even pregnancy, provided a
language shared by nearly all slaves in the agricultural
workforce, a sense unity that remained unsaid, but
was acted out daily.
Beyond the basic and confounding horror of it all, the problem of slavery in the cotton South was twofold. First, and most immediate, was the fear and risk of rebellion. With nearly four million individual slaves residing in the South in 1860, and nearly 2.5 million living in the “Cotton Belt” alone, the system of communication, resistance, and potential violence amongst slaves did not escape the minds of slaveholders across the region and nation as a whole. As early as 1787, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his Notes on the State of Virginia that blacks and whites were “two warring nations” held at bay by the existence of slavery. If white slave owners did not remain vigilant, Jefferson wrote, the presence of Africans in the Americas would “produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.”

Southern writers, planters, farmers, merchants, and politicians expressed the same fears more than a half century later. “The South cannot recede,” declared an anonymous writer in an 1852 issue of the New Orleans-based De Bow’s Review. “She must fight for her slaves or against them. Even cowardice would not save her.” To many slaveholders in the South, slavery was the saving grace not only of their own economic stability, but also the maintenance of peace and security in everyday life. Much of pro-slavery ideology rested upon the notion that slavery provided a sense of order, duty, and legitimacy to the lives of individual slaves, feelings that Africans and African Americans, it was said, could not otherwise experience. Without slavery, many thought, “blacks” (the word most often used for “slaves” in regular conversation) would become violent, aimless, and uncontrollable.

Some commentators recognized the problem in the 1850s, as the internal slave trade—the legal trade of slaves between states, along rivers, and along the Atlantic coastline—picked up in the decade before the Civil War. The problem was rather simple. The more slaves one owned, the more money is cost to a) maintain them, and b) extract product from their work. As planters and cotton growers expanded their
lands and purchased more slaves, their expectations increased.

And productivity, in large part, did increase. But it came on the backs of slaves with heavier workloads, longer hours, and more intense punishments. “The great limitation to production is labor,” wrote one commentator in the *American Cotton Planter* in 1853. And many planters recognized this limitation, and worked night and day, sometimes literally, to find the furthest extent of that limit. According to some contemporary accounts, by the mid 1850s, the expected production of an individual slave in Mississippi’s Cotton Belt had increased from between four and five bales (weighing about 500 pounds each) per day to between eight and ten bales per day, on average. Other, perhaps more reliable sources, such as the account book of Buena Vista Plantation in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, list average daily production at between 300 and 500 pounds “per hand,” with weekly averages ranging from 1,700 to 2,100 pounds “per hand.” Cotton production “per hand” increased by 600 percent in Mississippi between 1820 and 1860. Each slave, then, was working longer, harder hours to keep up with his or her master’s expected yield.

Here was capitalism with its most colonial, violent, and exploitative face. Humanity became a commodity used and worked to produce profit for a select group of investors, regardless of its shortfalls, dangers, and immoralities. But slavery, profit, and cotton did not exist only in the rural South. The Cotton Revolution sparked the growth of an urban South, cities that served as Southern hubs of a global market, conduits through which the work of slaves and the profits of planters met and funded a wider world.

### IV. The South and the City

Although much of the story of slavery and cotton lies in the rural areas where cotton actually grew, slaves worked in the fields, and planters and farmers held reign over their plantations and farms, the 1830s, 40s, and 50s saw an extraordinary spike in urban growth across the South. For nearly a half century after the Revolution, the South existed as a series of plantations, county seats, and small towns, some connected by roads, others connected only by rivers, streams, and lakes. Cities certainly existed, but they served more as local ports than regional, or national, commercial hubs. For example, New Orleans, then capital of Louisiana, which entered the union in 1812, was home to just over 27,000 people in 1820; and even with such a seemingly small population, it was the second largest city in the South—Baltimore had more than 62,000 people in 1820. Given the standard 19th-century measurement of an urban space (2,500+ people), the South had just ten in that year, one of which—Mobile, Alabama—contained only 2,672 individuals, nearly half of whom were enslaved.

As late as the 1820s, Southern life was predicated upon a rural lifestyle—farming, laboring, acquiring land and slaves, and producing whatever that land
and those slaves could produce. The market, often located in the nearest town or city, rarely stretched beyond state lines. Even in places like New Orleans, Charleston, and Norfolk, Va., which had active ports as early as the 1790s, shipments rarely, with some notable exceptions, left American waters or traveled further than the closest port down the coast. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, American involvement in international trade was largely confined to ports in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and, sometimes, Baltimore—which loosely falls under the demographic category of the South. Imports dwarfed exports. In 1807, U.S. imports outnumbered exports by nearly $100 million; and even as the Napoleonic Wars broke out in Europe, causing a drastic decrease in European production and trade, the United States still took in almost $50 million more than it sent out.

Cotton changed much of this, at least with respect to the South. Before cotton, the South had few major ports, almost none of which actively maintained international trade routes or even domestic supply routes. Internal travel and supply was difficult, especially on the waters of the Mississippi River, the main artery of the North American continent, and the eventual goldmine of the South. With a strong current, deadly undertow, and constant sharp turns, sandbars, and subsystems, navigating the Mississippi was difficult and dangerous. It promised a revolution in trade, transportation, and commerce only if the technology existed to handle its impossible bends, and fight against its southbound current. By the 1820s, and into the 1830s, small ships could successfully navigate their ways to New Orleans from as far north as Memphis and even St. Louis, if they so dared. But the problem was getting back. Most often, traders and sailors scuttled their boats upon landing in New Orleans, selling the wood for a quick profit or a journey home on a wagon or caravan.

The rise of cotton benefited from a change in transportation technology that aided and guided the growth of Southern cotton into one of the world’s leading commodities. In January 1812, a 371-ton ship called the New Orleans arrived at its namesake from the distance internal port of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was the first steamboat to navigate the internal waterways of the North American continent from end to the other, and remain capable of returning home. The technology was far from perfect—the New Orleans sank two years later after hitting a submerged sandbar covered in driftwood—but its successful trial promised a bright, new future for river-based travel.

And that future was, indeed, bright. Just five years after the New Orleans arrived in its city, seventeen steamboats ran regular upriver lines. By the mid 1840s, more than 700 steamboats did the same. In 1860, the port of New Orleans received and unloaded 3,500 steamboats, all focused entirely upon internal trade. These boats carried around 160,000 tons of raw product that merchants, traders, and agents converted into nearly $220 million in trade, all in a single year.
More than 80 percent of the yield was from cotton alone, the product of the same fields tilled, expanded, and sold over the preceding three decades. Only now, in the 1840s and 1850s, could those fields, plantations, and farms simply load their products onto a boat, and wait for the profit, credit, or supplies to return from “downriver.”

The explosion of steam power changed the face of the South, and indeed the nation as a whole. Everything that could be steam-powered was steam-powered, sometimes with very mixed results. Cotton gins, wagons, grinders, looms, and baths, among countless others, all fell under the net of this new technology. Most importantly, the South’s rivers, lakes, and bays were no longer barriers and hindrances to commerce. Quite the opposite, they had become the means by which commerce flowed, the roads of a modernizing society and region. And most importantly, the ability to use internal waterways connected the rural interior to increasingly urban ports, the sources of raw materials—i.e. cotton, tobacco, wheat, etc.—to an eager global market.

Coastal ports like New Orleans, Charleston, Norfolk, and even Richmond became targets of steamboats and coastal carriers. Merchants, traders, skilled laborers, and foreign speculators and agents flooded the towns. In fact, the South experienced a stronger trend in urbanization between 1820 and 1860 than the seemingly more industrial, urban-based North. Urbanization of the South simply looked different from that seen in the North and in Europe. Where most Northern and some European cities (most notably London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Paris) developed along the lines of industry, creating public spaces to boost the morale of wage laborers in factories, on the docks, and in storehouses, Southern
cities developed within the cyclical logic of sustaining the trade in cotton that justified and paid for the maintenance of an enslaved labor force. The growth of Southern cities, then, allowed slavery to flourish and brought the South into a more modern world.

Between 1820 and 1860, quite a few Southern towns experienced dramatic population growth, which paralleled the increase in cotton production and international trade to and from the South. The 27,176 people New Orleans claimed in 1820 expanded to more than 168,000 by 1860. In fact, in New Orleans, the population nearly quadrupled from 1830 to 1840 as the Cotton Revolution hit full stride. At the same time, Charleston’s population doubled, from 24,780 to 40,522; Richmond expanded threefold, growing from a town of 12,067 to a capital city of 37,910; and St. Louis experienced the largest increase of any city in the nation, expanding from a frontier town of 10,049 to a booming Mississippi River metropolis of 160,773.

The city and the field, the urban center and the rural space, were inextricably linked in the decades before the Civil War. And that relationship connected the region to a global market and community. As Southern cities grew, they became more cosmopolitan, attracting types of people either unsuited for, or uninterested in rural life. These people—merchants, skilled laborers, traders, sellers of all kinds and colors—brought rural to a market desperate for raw materials. Everyone, it seemed, had a place in the cotton trade. Agents, many of them transients from the North, and in some cases Europe, represented the interests of planters and cotton farmers in the cities, making connections with traders who in turn made deals with manufactories in the Northeast, Liverpool, and Paris.

Among the more important aspects of Southern urbanization is the development of a middle class in the urban centers, something that never fully developed in the more rural areas. In a very general sense, the rural South fell under a two-class system in which a landowning elite controlled the politics and most of the capital, and a working poor survived on subsistence farming or basic, unskilled labor funded by the elite. The development of large urban centers founded upon trade, and flush with transient populations of sailors, merchants, and travelers, gave rise to a large, highly developed middle class in the South. Predicated upon the idea of separation from those above and below them, middle class men and women in South thrived in the active, feverish rush of port city life.

Filled from the ranks of skilled craftsmen, merchants, traders, speculators, and store owners, the Southern middle class took on a communal identity that embraced the urban lifestyle. Fashion trends no longer required an honest function—such as a broad brimmed hat to protect one from the sun, knee-high boots for horse riding, and linen shirts and trousers to fight the heat of an unrelenting sun. Silk, cotton,
and bright colors came in vogue, especially in coastal cities like New Orleans and Charleston; cravats, golden broaches, diamonds, and “the best stylings of Europe” became the standards of urban middle-class life in the South. Neighbors, friends, and business partners formed and joined the same benevolent societies, dedicated, in a form of self-aggrandizing virtue, to aiding the less fortunate in society—the orphans, the impoverished, the destitute. But in many cases these benevolent societies simply served as a way to keep other people out of middle-class circles, sustaining both wealth and social prestige within an insular, well-regulated community. Members and partners married each others’ sisters, stood as godparents for each others’ children, and served, when the time came, as executors of fellow members’ wills.

The city bred exclusivity. That was part of the rush, part of fever of the time. Built upon the cotton trade, funded by European and Northeastern merchants, markets, and manufactories, Southern cities became headquarters of the nation’s largest and most profitable commodities—cotton and slaves. And they welcomed the world with open checkbooks and open arms.

V. Southern Cultures

Life, too, remained. The South, for all of its economic, agricultural, and technological growth, still housed many people, many cultures, and many individual lives. To understand the global and economic functions of the South, we also must understand the people who, just by living in the region, going to work each day, whether forced and voluntary, and participating the general dialogue of a community, made the whole thing work. The South, more than perhaps any other region in the United States, had a great diversity of cultures and situations. The South still relied on the existence of slavery; and as a result, it was home to nearly 4 million enslaved people by 1860, amounting to more than 45 percent of the entire Southern population. Naturally, these people, though fundamentally unfree in their movement, developed a culture all their own. They created kinship and family networks, systems of (often illicit) trade, linguistic codes, religious congregations, and even benevolent and social aid organizations—all this within the grip of slavery, a system dedicated to extraction rather than development, work and production rather than community and emotion.

The concept of family, more than anything else, played a crucial role in the daily lives of slaves. Family and kinship networks, and the benefits they carried, represented an institution through which slaves could piece together a sense of community, a sense of feeling and dedication, separate from the forced system of production that defined their daily lives. The creation of family units, distant relations, and communal traditions allowed slaves maintain religious beliefs, ancient ancestral traditions, and even names passed down from generation to generation.
in a way that challenged the ubiquitous nature of enslavement. Ideas passed between relatives on different plantations, names given to children in honor of the deceased, and the basic forms of love and devotion that bind closely-knit societies created a sense of individuality, an identity that assuaged the loneliness and desperation of enslaved life. Family defined how each plantation, each community, functioned, grew, and labored.

Nothing under slavery lasted long, at least not in the same form. Slave families and networks were no exceptions to this rule. African-born slaves during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries engaged in marriages—sometimes polygamous—with those of the same ethnic groups whenever possible. This, most importantly, allowed for the maintenance of cultural traditions, such as language, religion, name practices, and even the rare practice of bodily scaring. In some parts of the South, such as Louisiana and coastal South Carolina, ethnic homogeneity thrived, and as a result, traditions and networks survived relatively unchanged for decades. As the number of slaves arriving in the United States increased, and generations of American-born slaves overtook the original African-born populations, the practice of marriage, especially among members of the same ethnic group, or even simply the same plantation, became vital to the continuation of aging traditions. Marriage served as the single most important aspect of cultural and identity formation, as it connected slaves to their own pasts, and gave some sense of protection for the future. By the start of the Civil War, approximately two-thirds of slaves were members of nuclear households, each household averaging six people—mother, father, children, and often a grandparent, elderly aunt or uncle, and even “in-laws.” Those not members of a marriage bond, or even a nuclear family, still maintained family ties, most often living with a single parent, brother, sister, or grandparent.

Free people of color were present throughout the American South, particularly in urban areas like Charleston and New Orleans. Some were relatively well off, like this femme de couleur libre who posed with her mixed-race child in front of her New Orleans home, maintaining a middling position between free whites and unfree blacks. Free woman of color with quadroon daughter; late 18th century collage painting, New Orleans. Wikimedia
Many slave marriages endured for many years, as with all things under slavery, the threat of disruption, often through sale, always loomed. As the internal slave trade increased following the constitutional ban on slave importation in 1808 and the rise of cotton in the 1830s and 1840s, slave families, especially those established prior to the slaves’ arrival in the United States, came under increased threat. Hundreds of thousands of marriages, many with children, fell victim to sale “downriver”—a euphemism for the near constant flow of slave laborers down the Mississippi River to the developing cotton belt in the Southwest—as cheap land turned into cheap cotton. In fact, during the Cotton Revolution alone, between one-fifth and one-third of all slave marriages were broken up through sale or forced migration. But this was not the only threat. Planters, and slave owners of all shapes and sizes, recognized that marriage was, in the most basic and tragic sense, a privilege granted and defined by them for their slaves. And as a result, many slaveholders used slaves’ marriages, or the threats thereto, to squeeze out more production, counteract disobedience, or simply make a gesture of power and superiority.

Threats to family networks, marriages, and household stability did not stop with the death of a master. A slave couple could live their entire lives together, even having been born, raised, and married on the slave plantation, and, following the death of their master, find themselves at opposite sides of the known world. It only took a single relative, executor, creditor, or friend of the deceased to make a claim against the estate to cause the sale and dispersal of an entire slave community.

Enslaved women were particularly vulnerable to the shifts of fate attached to slavery. In many cases, female slaves did the same work as men, spending the day—from sun up to sun down—in the fields picking and bundling cotton. In some rare cases, especially among the larger plantations, planters tended to use women as house servants more than men, but this was not universal. In both cases, however, females slaves’ experiences were different than their male counterparts, husbands, and neighbors. Sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, and constant childrearing while continuing to work the fields all made life as a female slave more prone to disruption and uncertainty. Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved woman from North Carolina, chronicled her master’s attempts to sexually abuse her in her narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Jacobs suggested that her successful attempts to resist sexual assault and her determination to love whom she pleased was “something akin to freedom.” But this “freedom,” however empowering and contextual, did not cast a wide net. Many enslaved women had no choice concerning love, sex, and motherhood. On plantations, small farms, and even in cities, rape was ever-present. Like the splitting of families, slave owners used sexual violence as a form of terrorism, a way to promote increased production, obedience,
and power relations. And this was not restricted only to unmarried women. In numerous contemporary accounts, particularly violent slave owners forced men to witness the rape of their wives, daughters, and relatives, often as punishment, but occasionally as a sadistic expression of power and dominance.

The key is that, as property, enslaved women had no recourse, and society, by and large, did not see a crime in this type of violence. Racist pseudo-scientists claimed that whites could not physically rape Africans or African Americans, as the sexual organs of each were not compatible in that way. State law, in some cases, supported this view, claiming that rape could only occur between either two white people or a black man and a white woman. All other cases fell under a silent acceptance. The consequences of rape, too, fell to the victim in the case of slaves. Pregnancies that resulted from rape did not always lead to a lighter workload for the mother. And if a slave acted out against a rapist, whether that be her master, mistress, or any other white attacker, her actions were seen as crimes rather than desperate acts of survival. For example, a 19-year-old slave named Celia fell victim to repeated rape by her master in Callaway County, Missouri. Between 1850 and 1855, Robert Newsom raped Celia hundreds of times, producing two children and several miscarriages. Sick and desperate in the fall of 1855, Celia took a club and struck her master in the head, killing him. But instead of sympathy and aid, or even an honest attempt to understand and empathize, the community rallied around their dead friend, calling for the execution of Celia. On November 16, 1855, after a trial of ten days, Celia, the 19-year-old rape victim and slave, was hanged for her crimes against her master.

Gender inequality did not always fall along the same lines as racial inequality. Southern society, especially in the age of cotton, deferred to white men, under whom laws, social norms, and cultural practices were written, dictated, and maintained. White and free women of color lived in a society dominated, in nearly every aspect, by men. Denied voting rights, women, of all statuses and colors, had no direct representation in the creation and discussion of law. Husbands, it was said, represented their wives, as the public sphere was too violent, heated, and high-minded for the female intellectual and physical frame. Society expected women to represent the foundations of the republic, gaining respectability through their
work at home, in support of their husbands and children, away from the rough and boisterous realm of masculinity. In many cases, too, law did not protect women the same way it protected men. In most states, marriage, an act expected of any self-respecting, reasonable woman of any class, effectively transferred all of a woman’s property to her husband, forever, regardless of claim or command. Divorce existed, but it hardly worked in a woman’s favor, and often, if successful, ruined the wife’s standing in society, and even led to well-known cases of suicide.

Life on the ground in cotton South, like the cities, systems, and networks within which it rested, defied the standard narrative of the Old South. Slavery existed to dominate, yet slaves formed bonds, maintained traditions, and crafted new culture. They fell in love, had children, and protected one another using the privileges granted them by their captors, and the basic intellect allowed all human beings. They were resourceful, brilliant, and vibrant, and they created freedom where freedom seemingly could not exist. But threats remained for all people in the cotton South, especially those frowned upon by the patriarchal system upon which Southern society was built. And within those communities, resilience and dedication often led to cultural sustenance. Among the enslaved, women, and the impoverished-but-free, culture thrived in ways that are difficult to see through the bales of cotton and the stacks of money sitting on the docks and in the counting houses of the South’s urban centers. But religion, honor, and pride transcended material goods, especially among those who could not express themselves that way.

VI. Religion and Honor in the Slave South

Economic growth, violence, and exploitation coexisted and mutually reinforced evangelical Christianity in the South. The revivals the Second Great Awakening established the region’s prevailing religious culture. Led by Methodists, Baptists, and to a lesser degree, Presbyterians, this intense period of religious regeneration swept the along southern backcountry. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the vast majority of southerners who affiliated with a religious denomination belonged to either the Baptist or Methodist faith. Both churches in the South briefly attacked slavery before...
transforming into some of the most vocal defenders of slavery and the southern social order.

Southern ministers contended that God himself had selected Africans for bondage but also considered the evangelization of slaves to be one of their greatest callings. Missionary efforts among southern slaves largely succeeded and Protestantism spread rapidly among African Americans, leading to a proliferation of biracial congregations and prominent independent black churches. Some black and white southerners forged positive and rewarding biracial connections; however, more often black and white southerners described strained or superficial religious relationships.

As the institution of slavery hardened racism in the South, relationships between missionaries and Native Americans transformed as well. Missionaries of all denominations were among the first to represent themselves as “pillars of white authority.” After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, plantation culture expanded into the Deep South, and mission work became a crucial element of Christian expansion. Frontier mission schools carried a continual flow of Christian influence into Native American communities. Some missionaries learned indigenous languages, but many more worked to prevent indigenous children from speaking their native tongues, insisting upon English for Christian understanding. By the Indian removals of 1835 and the Trail of Tears in 1838, missionaries in the South preached a proslavery theology that emphasized obedience to masters, the biblical basis of racial slavery via the curse of Ham, and the “civilizing” paternalism of slave-owners.

Slaves most commonly received Christian instruction from white preachers or masters, whose religious message typically stressed slave subservience. Anti-literacy laws ensured that most slaves would be unable to read the Bible in its entirety and thus could not acquaint themselves with such inspirational stories as Moses delivering the Israelites out of slavery. Contradictions between God’s Word and master and mistress cruelty did not pass unnoticed by many enslaved African Americans. As former slave William Wells Brown declared, “slaveholders hide themselves behind the Church,” adding that “a more praying, preaching, psalm-singing people cannot be found than the slaveholders of the South.”

Many slaves chose to create and practice their own versions of Christianity, one that typically incorporated aspects of traditional African religions with limited input from the white community. Nat Turner, for example, found inspiration from religion early in life. Adopting an austere Christian lifestyle during his adolescence, Turner claimed to have been visited by “spirits” during his twenties, and considered himself something of a prophet. He claimed to have had visions, in which he was called upon to do the work of God, leading some contemporaries (as well as historians) to question his sanity.
Inspired by his faith, Turner led the most deadly slave rebellion in the antebellum South. On the morning of August 22, 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia, Nat Turner and six collaborators attempted to free the region’s enslaved population. Turner initiated the violence by killing his master with an axe blow to the head. By the end of the day, Turner and his band, which had grown to over fifty men, killed fifty-seven white men, women, and children on eleven farms. By the next day, the local militia and white residents had captured or killed all of the participants except Turner, who hid for a number of weeks in nearby woods before being captured and executed. The white terror that followed Nat Turner’s rebellion transformed southern religion, as anti-literacy laws increased and black-led churches were broken up and placed under the supervision of white ministers.

Evangelical religion also shaped understandings of what it meant to be a southern man or a southern woman. Southern manhood was largely shaped by an obsession with masculine honor, whereas southern womanhood centered on expectations of sexual virtue or purity. Honor prioritized the public recognition of white masculine claims to reputation and authority. Southern men developed a code to ritualize their interactions with each other and to perform their expectations of honor. This code structured language and behavior and was designed to minimize conflict. But when conflict did arise, the code also provided rituals that would reduce the resulting violence.

The formal duel exemplified the code in action. If two men could not settle a dispute through the arbitration of their friends, they would exchange pistol shots to prove their equal honor status. Duelists arranged a secluded meeting, chose from a set of deadly weapons and risked their lives as they clashed with swords or fired pistols at one another. Some of the most illustrious men in American history participated in a duel at some point during their lives, including President Andrew Jackson, Vice-President Aaron Burr, United States Senators Henry Clay, and Thomas Hart Benton. In all but Burr’s case, dueling assisted in Elevating these men to prominence.

Violence amongst the lower classes, especially those in the backcountry, involved fistfights and shootouts. Tactics included the sharpening of fingernails and filing of teeth into razor sharp points, which would be used to gouge eyes and bite off ears and noses. In a duel, a gentleman achieved recognition by risking his life rather than killing his opponent, whereas those involved in rough-and-tumble fighting achieved victory through maiming their opponent.

The legal system was partially to blame for the prevalence of violence in the Old South. Although states and territories had laws against murder, rape, and various other forms of violence, including specific laws against dueling, upper-class southerners were rarely prosecuted and juries often acquitted the accused. Despite the fact that hundreds of duelists fought and killed one another, there is little evidence
that many duelists faced prosecution, and only one, Timothy Bennett (Belleville, Illinois), was ever executed. By contrast, prosecutors routinely sought cases against lower-class southerners, who were found guilty in greater numbers than their wealthier counterparts.

The southern emphasis on honor affected women as well. While southern men worked to maintain their sense of masculinity, so too southern women cultivated a sense of femininity. Femininity in the South was intimately tied to the domestic sphere, even more so than for women in the North. The cult of domesticity strictly limited the ability of wealthy southern women to engage in public life. While northern women began to organize reform societies, southern women remained bound to the home where they were instructed to cultivate their families’ religious sensibility and manage their household. Managing the household was not easy work, however. For women on large plantations, managing the household would include directing a large bureaucracy of potentially rebellious slaves. For the vast majority of southern women who did not live on plantations, managing the household would include nearly constant work in keeping families clean, fed, and well-behaved. On top of these duties, many southern women would be required to assist with agricultural tasks.

Female labor was an important aspect of the southern economy, but the social position of women in southern culture was understood not through economic labor but rather through moral virtue. While men fought to get ahead in a turbulent world of cotton boom, women were instructed to offer a calming, moralizing influence on husbands and children. The home was to be a place of quiet respite and spiritual solace. Under the guidance of a virtuous woman, the southern home would foster the values required for economic success and cultural refinement. Female virtue came to be understood largely as a euphemism for sexual purity, and southern culture, southern law, and southern violence largely centered on protecting that virtue of sexual purity from any possible imagined threat. In a world saturated with the sexual exploitation of black women, southerners developed a paranoid obsession with protecting the sexual purity of white women. Black men were presented as an insatiable sexual threat. Racial systems of violence and domination were wielded with crushing intensity for generations, all in the name of keeping white womanhood as pure as the cotton that anchored southern society.

VII. Conclusion

Cotton created the antebellum South. The wildly profitable commodity opened a previously closed society to the grandeur, the profit, the exploitation, and the social dimensions of a larger, more connected, global community. In this way, the South, and the world, benefited from the Cotton Revolution and the urban growth it sparked. But not all that glitters is gold. Slavery remained, and as a result of urbanization,
the internal slave trade increased to untold heights as the 1860s approached. Politics, race relations, and the burden of slavery continued beneath the roar of steamboats, counting houses, and the exchange of goods. Underneath it all, many questions remained—chief among them, what to do if slavery somehow came under threat.

Content provided by The American Yawp
### The South Timeline: 1793 - 1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Gabriel Prosser’s rebellion plot in Virginia exposed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Virginia puts greater restrictions on manumission of slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>International slave trade abolished.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810s - 1850s</td>
<td>All white, Southern males given the right to vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816 - 1820</td>
<td>Southern whites migrate to the, then, southwestern part of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820s - 1830s</td>
<td>Slave Codes legislated throughout the South to strengthen in the institution. Slavery more aggressively defended by Southern politicians and intellectuals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Denmark Vesey’s slave rebellion plot in Charleston, South Carolina; Vesey executed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Approximately two-million slaves in the South.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Nat Turner’s rebellion in Virginia. Southerners react negatively to William Lloyd Garrison’s antislavery newspaper, the Liberator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Virginia defeated a motion for gradual emancipation of slaves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Publication of Catechism for Colored Persons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Abolitionist publications burned in Charleston, South Carolina. Throughout the South, stricter black codes implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Arkansas became a slave state in the Union. Congress passed the “gag rule,” preventing the discussion of antislavery motions. Southerners aggressively defend the institution of slavery as proper and good in Congress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Cotton became 60% of the US export economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Texas and Florida entered as slave states in the Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>One of the few textile mills in the South opened.</td>
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### UNIT 8

#### TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td><em>Sociology for the South</em> published by George Fitzhugh as a defense of the institution of slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>The South’s slave population reached approximately four-million, about 1/3rd of the South’s population.</td>
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Antebellum North Society and Economy

Romanticism:
Times also were “romantic,” with the heart ruling the mind. Americans believed that they had set into motion world-wide democratic revolutions (in the late 1840s), and they took pride in their past. Cultural Nationalism continued, as Americans started to examine the question: What did it mean to be an American? Writers and intellectuals undertook this self-examination. A highly emotionalized aspect of the era was related to the era’s death and mourning culture.

Sensationalism Enters Journalism:
The U.S. had a large number of newspapers, with the majority being printed in the North, especially around New England. Due to technological developments and the use of advertising to fund printing costs, publishers produced mass-market newspapers sold for a penny or two. Nicknamed the “penny press,” these sheets conveyed the news of the nation and local areas to the common person who regularly bought copies, as well as to the upper classes, who held yearly subscriptions. The stories in the papers were written to get peoples’ attention. Stories on murder, rape, theft, police records, court cases, scandals, city news, and items and rumors on the elite (society pages) were what made sales grow. However, the news of the day and political events were read and discussed by the average American in the North. Thus, during the 19th century most Northerners were informed about local, state, and even national political issues.

Thriving Publishing Industry:
New England, as the intellectual and publishing center of the U.S., saw many publications reflecting a version of U.S. history that glorified the country’s accomplishments. Books, magazines, and journals were published with national distribution. Booksellers and libraries were more commonplace. Ideas spread throughout the North more rapidly.

Oratory:
Speeches were popular forms of entertainment. From itinerant speakers to religious preachers to politicians to local experts, people came out to hear people talk about all kinds of information. It was a way to stay informed, but it also offered opportunities to network and socialize. Someone who was a good orator gained a reputation, if not fame, and often could be found on a speaking circuit. Speakers appealed to people of all classes, genders, and races, but keep in mind that working class people often had less opportunities to hear those who spoke at more, let’s say, upscale venues. And, remember that women were not to speak in front of mixed audiences; when they did, they were considered radical and often paid a price for doing so.

Violence:
The era also was violent in character. On the frontier, violence was prevalent (gun fights, violence between
whites and Native Americans, etc...) In cities, there were: accidents daily in homes & factories. There were transportation disasters (e.g. steam ships exploding). In the cities you could find: gangs, drunkenness, racial violence, and even wild boars, feral dogs, and other animals living in the streets. Even considering that at the time corporal punishment was socially acceptable, domestic and child abuse were present, as well. On top of it all, police protection for anyone was minimal if not absent. (In the South, violence was inherent to the institution of slavery.)

Death & Disease:
Unsanitary conditions and disease also were commonplace. In urban areas, disease spread due to filth and overcrowded conditions. Poor ventilation was common in homes and in the factories. Indoor plumbing was absent, and diseases of the time like: malaria, TB, yellow fever, cholera, as well as sexually transmitted diseases were prevalent. For a women the MOST dangerous thing she could do (health wise) was to give birth. All of these factors combined to produce an average life span of approximately 50 years.

Doctoring:
Medical treatments often were worse than the diseases! Physicians were trained poorly, and were considered “quacks” by the general populace, who instead relied upon home-remedies (herbs, etc...) for healing. Medical doctors primarily were used by the middle and upper classes and prescribed arsenic, leaching, and blood letting as remedies to ailments. Doctors did not understand germs and how disease was transmitted until the early 20th century, so most of what physicians had to offer was considered worse than the in-home-remedies used.

Morality:
Morality also was important and by modern standards, in some cases, quite rigid. Personal behavior was watched by others, especially if you were in the middle or upper classes. People were expected to conform to the social standards set by the middle and upper classes.

Reform Movements Overview
Reform efforts and activities were part of the social expectations of the middle and upper classes in the North. It was anticipated that if you were an individual of wealth, you would give time and money toward social reforms. Middle and upper class women especially were called upon for this kind of work, as unlike their husbands and men and women of the lower classes, they did not “work.” Thus, it became their “work” (or their sphere of influence) to manage their households, by overseeing the domestic servants, but also to be community-minded by participating in social reforms. It was NOT uncommon for a person of the upper and middle classes (male or female) to belong to several reform movements. And, through these reform efforts, the upper classes tried to establish standards for social conduct to which all classes were expected to adhere.
The practical living conditions of the North, “Middle Class Moralism,” and the Second Great Awakening encouraged the growth of many reform efforts that led to significant changes in American society. Some of these reforms included: increasing the number of jails, building asylums for the deaf and blind, establishing poor houses for those in poverty, providing help to the sickly, forming temperance societies to end problems associated with drunkenness, and supporting abolitionism to end of slavery.

Other reforms combated the ill-effects of industrialization and urbanization. Sylvester Graham was one such health reformer. He proposed a “health program” that included better eating habits like: eating slowly, eating less sugar and starch, and consuming a heavy wheat cracker (Graham Cracker) for fiber. Because women’s fashions damaged the skeletal system, he also called for women to stop wearing corsets and to start wearing looser and lighter clothing.

Women’s Roles & Rights

Women’s Rights was another social-political movement of the antebellum era. Through the work of middle and upper class women in reform movements, it became evident that women themselves had common problems. There were many women of the same and lower classes who did not agree or have time for the cause. Thus, progressive women of the middle and upper classes were the leaders of the women’s rights movement. Discussions amongst women, especially those who were abolitionists, resulted in the formation of societies for the advancement of women’s rights. When women were banned from talking to mixed audiences at abolitionist rallies or from attending abolitionist conventions, many started to view themselves as being in a secondary class to men and became determined to gain equal treatment under the law. Taking inspiration from the gender equality seen in many Native American tribes, these women were inspired to organize and foment long-term change in the status of white, American women. (For more information see: Wagner, Sally Roesch. “Sisters in Spirit.” Summertown, TN: Native Voices, 2001.)

These organizations were divided on how to obtain their goals. Some felt that emancipation of blacks was a more pressing goal, while others demanded that both blacks and women achieve rights concurrently. These differences weakened the movement, but nonetheless important leaders emerged. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott led the Seneca Falls Convention in New York state. The group produced the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, a document calling for women’s rights that was modeled after the Declaration of Independence. This convention was considered the start of the women’s rights movement, and other leaders emerged, such as Susan B. Anthony. The movement saw its ups and downs, but finally women (after receiving the vote throughout the U.S. at the state level in the late 19th century) achieved the right
to vote at the national level via the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

Other aspects of women’s roles changed during the industrial era. Once men left the home in large numbers to work in factories and businesses, the concept of home as an economic unit faded and was replaced with the ideal that the home was to be a safe-haven from the ills of the industrialized working world. Women were left behind in the home, and thus it became the “woman’s sphere.” Inflated standards of housekeeping were created by the middle and upper classes. The ideal woman kept an immaculate home, whether she did it herself or had the help of servants. (This ideal has been called the “Cult of Domesticity.”) The middle and upper classes who could afford not to work outside or inside the home usually had servants.

Working class women were looked down upon by the upper classes for not living up to “middle class ideals.” However, many working class women, unlike their middle and upper class counterparts, produced income for their families. Unlike the upper classes, many working class women actually had economic power within the family structure. This was much different from the upper classes, where women were almost entirely dependent upon their husbands economic power. Legally, though women of all classes were the property of their husbands. And, even amongst the upper and middle classes, there were many women who opposed, in some cases actively, the agenda of the women’s rights movement.

With industrialization the concept of motherhood and childhood also changed. Prior to the antebellum era, mothers did not have legal responsibility for children, and fathers obtained custody of the children during divorces. With industrialization and men working outside of the home, women’s roles also shifted onto being loving and nurturing mothers. Motherhood was idealized. Mothers were expected to develop strong emotional bonds with their children. Children were to be cherished and not viewed as being born to serve the household economy. The upper classes set a new ideal: the family unit existed for the benefit of the children and not vice versa. This concept would not be embraced fully until the 20th century, when the standard of living increased enough for all classes to view children not as contributors to the family’s economy but as benefactors of their parent’s incomes.

The Second Great Awakening and the Movements Against Slavery

Religion and the Second Great Awakening particularly were influential. The antebellum era was a religious age. With death and disease being so commonplace, people found comfort in their religious beliefs. (The religious ideal valued in the U.S. was Protestantism) Individuals were expected to fight evil where ever it was. And, in general abolitionists defined slavery as an evil, because it impinged on a persons “free will” -
a central concept to Christianity. These abolitionists felt that by turning away from the fight against slavery, a person was giving into evil. To a slight degree, because of this view, abolitionism and anti-slavery views grew during this era in the North.

Abolitionism itself had a long history. Before the Revolution there were only a few abolitionist groups organized, but afterwards abolitionist societies increased in number, due to the contradiction of slavery existing in the republic. With the international slave trade ending in 1808, only the domestic slave trade was legal. By 1817, the American Colonization Society formed. Philosophically, this organization believed that the two races could not live together. Thus, they proposed that freed slaves be sent to Liberia. Because workers in the Northeast feared that emancipated blacks would take away industrial jobs, while in the West people feared agricultural competition from the slave holding aristocracy of the South, the ACS found some followers in these sections. Despite abolitionist sentiments, white supremacists (even within abolitionist groups) believed that allowing slave labor beyond the Mississippi and north of the Mason-Dixon Line would lead to the racial conflict and violence. Though many Northerners disliked slavery, most held a free-soil view, for the reasons already stated. Thus, more Northerners were anti-slavery versus abolitionist. To be anti-slavery meant that, if you were a white northerner, you typically disliked the institution of slavery, but accepted it where it was. You would not have wanted slavery expanding westward, and certainly would not approve of slavery being made legal in the North. Typically, you would be a racist, as well. Abolitionists actually were a small minority of the population, with political and economic influence. If you were an abolitionist, you would have wanted slavery to end, everywhere. How you would have wanted that to happen varied quite a bit. And, keep in mind, that just because someone, who was white, was an abolitionist, it didn’t mean they weren’t also a racist!

Some of the leading abolitionists of the era were:

- **William Lloyd Garrison** was a Christian reformer from Massachusetts who in the 1820s focused his attentions on the cause of abolition. In 1831 he founded the abolitionist newspaper called, The Liberator. In it he called for the immediate emancipation of blacks without compensation to slave holders for their losses, as some suggested. This was radical view. He firmly believed that slavery was a sin and that society should not pay the owners for doing what was right. In 1832, he founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society which would become the American Anti-Slavery Society. As sectional tensions increased through the 1830-50s, and Garrison, like others associated with the cause, was threatened and attacked. Often abolitionists faced violence to their persons and property. As abolition gained a greater public voice, so too did the Southern “Fire Eaters,” who were the group of South-
erners who vehemently defended the institution of slavery.

- Frederick Douglass was born a slave. He cultivated white friends who taught him to read and write. He tried to escape in 1834, but failed. He then became an apprentice to a ship caulker and mastered the craft so well that he brought his master a lot of business. In 1838, he tried to escape again and succeeded. Relying upon friends, he disguised himself as a sailor and made it to freedom in NY City. Eventually he moved to Mass. where he found work in the ship yards. However, he quickly found out that despite his expert skills, he was discriminated against in employment. In 1841, he attended an anti-slavery society conference, and it was there that he met Garrison who convinced Douglass to take up the cause as a speaker and writer. Douglass did so and made a career out of it. He founded his own newspaper, The North Star, and was a major leader in the abolitionist movement.

- Sojourner Truth was born a slave and was freed in 1827. She moved north and became leading speaker and preacher against the institution of slavery. She also saw the position of women in society as being less than ideal and became feminist who pushed for both the cause of abolition and women’s rights.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin was published (1852) and widely read during the antebellum era. It was translated and sold world-wide. Over all it was one of the most influential books in American history, because it highlighted the viciousness of the institution of slavery and fueled sentiments of anti-slavery and the abolitionist movement.

Temperance or “Killing Demon Rum”

Temperance was of the most popular social reform movements of the era, as some people considered excessive drinking as an evil. Temperance also fit into the era of industrialization. Previously, skilled artisans made products on their own time schedule. Drinks at break times were part of the day’s activities and pay. With industrialization, company owners hired unskilled laborers to produce high quantities of goods at great speeds. Breaks were not part of the day’s routine, and neither were drinks. Drinking slowed down the industrial process, and drunkenness was dangerous around the fast moving machinery. In some states, by the 1850s, temperance turned into outright prohibition. In 1851, the Maine Law was passed which prohibited the sail of liquor. 13 states followed, and all of them were in the North, excepting Delaware. (This fact highlighted the reality that reform movements were a northern phenomenon. Southerners rejected most reform movements, due to the close association of the supporters of these causes to other reform efforts, including abolitionism.)
Nativism

Temperance also was a popular and significant reform movement during an era with high rates of immigration from Germany and Ireland. Like other Europeans, these groups drank culturally. Nativists who were opposed to immigrants often sited lack of temperance as a reason for restricting immigration. Nativism was high in the North. The major immigrant groups from Europe preferred to settle where free labor was used. (It was nearly impossible for a free laborer to find work or want to work where slave labor existed.) The main groups of immigrants in antebellum America were the Germans and Irish. The Germans were wealthier and were able to move away from the eastern seaboard cities. Germans formed prosperous farming communities in the West. They were resented because they clustered together, did not speak the language, drank culturally, and often were Catholic. The Irish were the most disliked immigrant group of this era. Usually Catholic and culturally known to drink, many people viewed the Irish, like the English did, as second-class people. The general stereotypes of the Irish were that they were drunkards, violent, lazy, and morally corrupt.

Politically Whigs disliked immigrants because they tended to vote Democratic. Native laboring classes did not like them, because they would work for lower wages and undercut native workers jobs. Protestants were upset with the growing number of Catholic immigrants. Eventually, nativists formed organizations against immigrants. In the 1850s, secret societies formed and pushed for restrictions on immigration, longer periods for naturalization, and for barring Catholics from public office. One such group was the Know-Nothings, who organized into a political party and ran in the 1854 election as the American Party. They died out, due to their negativity, intolerance, anti-democratic views, and because they too had northern and southern wings that split over the question of slave labor in the territories.

Communication, Technology, and Transportation Overview

Important for the reform efforts of the era was the fact that communication during the antebellum era improved considerably. New technological wonders facilitated long-distance communication. The telegraph, railroad, steam press (for printing more newspapers, magazines, and journals more quickly), more free public schools (literacy), the Railway Postal Service, and cheaper postage spread information and ideas. This meant that abolitionists and others shared their words and ideas with a larger audience. And, important to the theme of the class was the fact that the public became more aware of the economic and cultural differences between the North and South. Northern society was technologically advanced compared to the South. And, what slave labor was to southerners, in terms of the investment of capital, was what technological innovations & free labor were to the North.
Some Background: U.S. industrial and technological development started in the colonial era, when colonists adapted old technologies and created new items for the American work-environment. The educational system of the North also produced workers and artisans who chose to use their innovations for the betterment of American society. For example during the Revolution, Congress employed northern gunsmiths, paper makers, and craftsmen to aid the cause of freedom.

The U.S. also had the “American System” of manufacturing, designed by Eli Whitney in the 1790s. By the antebellum era the use of his system of interchangeable parts was commonplace and revolutionized industrial production. The need for skilled craftsmen was eliminated because with Whitney’s system, all parts of a product were produced with the same design (punched out). Prior to his invention products were artisan-made with each piece of the design hand fitted to others.

With each decade, the U.S. advanced its technological innovations through the designs of the common man. Every generation of Northerners added to the technological achievements of former ones. This persisted to the point whereby technicians and industrialists actually created industrialization as a way of life in the North. This did not happen in the South, and the politics of sectionalism reflected this fact. The development of technologies enabled the North to employ and value free labor over slave labor. Northern industrial technology made the U.S. an economic leader and later a military superpower. Northern technological growth provided a wealth of material goods for Americans and created a high standard of living in the 20th century.

Thus, the prosperity of the modern era was built on the backs of the individuals who developed and invested in new technologies in the 19th century. The free-labor, industrial society of the North had its roots in the Hamiltonian vision for America, and politically its supporters pushed at the national level for governmental backing of the country’s technological and industrial growth. This was in direct contrast to the goals of the agrarian (Jeffersonian) South.

As mentioned before, a highly political issue of the antebellum era, which sparked sectional tensions, was internal improvements. The question was whether or not private or government funding should be used to further technological growth. This question arose primarily over transportation-related spending. Northerners generally felt that the government needed to finance almost all internal improvements, while southerners normally were against such expenditures for intrastate and/or interstate projects. They believed that if the central government interfered in one area of a state’s life (via financial support) that ultimately it would interfere in others and perhaps with the use of slave versus free labor.
Northern technological development occurred in stages, but many of these overlapped. Most of the technological development was linked to transportation improvements. The general progression was as follows: the turnpike era, the canal era, the river-steam boat era, and the railroad era. Agricultural and industrial production also were part of the mechanization of America.

### Turnpike Era

- **Problem in society**: poor, muddy roads that were bad for long-distance travel; innovation: macadized road (asphalt);
- **Designer**: J.L. McAdam;
- **Result**: could move goods and people longer distances;
- **Larger implications**: a national network of roads was established, linking people, goods, and ideas. Economic growth occurred and exchanges between East and West improved.

People were hired to build roads; government reaction: northern states wanted more federal road construction, and arguments on where roads would be built and by whom (public or private/ state or federal) were common. (Private toll roads built were quite successful.)

- **Problem in society**: could not readily transport goods from one river to another without unloading, which was a costly process; innovation: the canal designer: many engineers and technicians;
- **Result**: transportation on rivers became easier and more cost-effective;
- **Larger implications**: thousands were employed to build canals, especially immigrants who worked inexpensively. 1825 the Erie Canal opened between Erie and Buffalo. By 1850 nearly 3,785 miles of canal existed in the U.S.; government reaction: state governments will spend money on canals. Private canals will be opened as well. Canals were a source of argument for questions on internal improvement spending. But they also intrigued the American mind, and worked their way into popular culture via the songs of the day.

- **Problem in society**: could not travel up stream;
- **Innovation**: steam boats; designer: Robert Fulton (1807) and others improving the designs;
- **Result**: upstream movement meant that transportation costs declined. Goods could readily be shipped up stream, further linking regional economies. Great Lakes travel and trade increased. Trade on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers also increased. By 1860, there were nearly 3,000 steam ships in use;
• **Larger implications:** Steam ships, especially the earlier ones, had the unfortunate tendency to explode, causing the loss of life and property. The U.S. developed larger trade networks; government reaction: Steam was used on the high seas to improve the U.S. naval power.

**Railroad Era**

• **Problem in society:** the need for faster and more efficient transportation;

• **Innovation:** steam engine train locomotive designer: John Jervis, Charles Danforth, Phineas Davis, and hundreds of others. Many locomotive prototypes were built and tested in local mechanics shops and in the railroad shops. These men were nicknamed “the ingenious mechanics of an era;”

• **Result:** The Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad was established in 1830 and other companies followed. By 1850, there were 3,328 miles of railroad track, and by 1860, 31,000 miles of railroad track existed. The majority of the tracks were in the North, thus railroad development was a sectional issue;

• **Larger implications:** Cheap immigrant labor was used to build the cars and the railroad lines. Goods were transported to market at lower costs and new markets were created. Drastic communication changes occurred leading to the spreading of more ideas. The economies and cultures of the Northeast and Northwest were permanently linked. The railroad became the backbone of industrial growth in the U.S., and it lead to the creation of large corporate entities in the late 19th century. For all people, the pace of life changed - it became faster and more linked to time schedules; government reaction: The federal government took some of its first steps at regulating business practices (in the late 19th century) as a result of the railroad industry.

**Agriculture Mechanization**

• **Problem in society:** an increasing population demanded more food innovation: technologies to increase food production. (Farm tools before 1800 had changed very little since ancient times.);

• **Designers:** John Deere (steel tipped plow), Cyrus McCormick (Mechanical Reaper used 2 men and 1 horse and could do the work of 20!) Railroads also helped agricultural development;

• **Result:** more food produced and shipped to markets further away;

• **Larger implications:** the Northwest was dependent upon the industrial Northeast for the production of farm goods and machinery as well as for markets for agricultural goods. Machines substituted human labor, and eventually
agribusiness started to replace small farms; government reaction: the Northeast and Northwest shared political and economic agendas, as well as, a similar mechanical culture.

**Industrial Development**

- **Problem in society**: the need to produce goods at a greater rates of production and to expand the factory system used in the textile industry to other areas

- **Innovators**: Many; e.g. Francis Lowell established his textile factory in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1810.

- **Result**: New England in 1817 produced 4 million yards of fabric. In 1827, that number went up to 380 million yards. Southern cotton was used in that process.

- **Larger implications**: After the 1830s, factories spread to other northern industries, and individuals invented new machines and ways of organizing industrial production. The U.S. led the world in the manufacturing of clothing. Isaac Singer developed the sewing machine in 1836. With it, Americans produced high-quality, mass-produced clothing.

**Effects of the Internal Improvements of the Industrial Era**

1. Time and cost of production and distribution went down.

2. New markets were created and prices dropped. (i.e. flower went from $2.48/barrel to $.28/barrel)

3. By the end of the 19th century America could provide for its citizens better than any individual European country.

4. Americans entered the machine age of industrialization, as a result of steam power.

5. Household subsistence industries were replaced, especially in the Northeast by the factory system.

6. Catalog industry developed and led to the advertising industry of the late 19th century.

7. The United States became one of the wealthiest countries in the world, due to capitalist entrepreneurs.

*Content provided by Dr. June Klees*
I. Introduction

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans’ endless commercial ambition—what one Baltimore paper in 1815 called an “almost universal ambition to get forward”—remade the nation. Between the Revolution and the Civil War, an old subsistence world died and a new more-commercial nation was born. Americans integrated the technologies of the Industrial Revolution into a new commercial economy. Steam power, the technology that moved steamboats and railroads, fueled the rise of American industry by powering mills and sparking new national transportation networks. A “market revolution” was busy remaking the nation.

The revolution reverberated across the country. More and more farmers grew crops for profit, not self-sufficiency. Vast factories and cities arose in the North. Enormous fortunes materialized. A new middle class ballooned. And as more men and women worked in the cash economy, they were freed from the bound dependence of servitude. But there were costs to this revolution. As northern textile factories boomed, the demand for southern cotton swelled and the institution of American slavery accelerated. Northern subsistence farmers became laborers bound to the whims of markets and bosses. The market revolution sparked not only explosive economic growth and new personal wealth but also devastating depressions—“pan-
ics”—and a growing lower class of property-less workers. Many Americans labored for low wages and became trapped in endless cycles of poverty. Some workers—often immigrant women—worked thirteen hours a day, six days a week. Others labored in slavery. Massive northern textile mills turned southern cotton into cheap cloth. And although northern states washed their hands of slavery, their factories fueled the demand for slave-grown southern cotton that ensured the profitability and continued existence of the American slave system. And so, as the economy advanced, the market revolution wrenched the United States in new directions as it became a nation of free labor and slavery, of wealth and inequality, and of endless promise and untold perils.

II. Early Republic Economic Development

The growth of the American economy reshaped American life in the decades before the Civil War. Americans increasingly produced goods for sale, not for consumption. With a larger exchange network connected by improved transportations, the introduction of labor-saving technology, and the separation of the public and domestic spheres, the market revolution fulfilled the revolutionary generation’s expectations of progress but introduced troubling new trends. Class conflict, child labor, accelerated immigration, and the expansion of slavery followed. These strains required new family arrangements and forged new urban cultures.

American commerce had proceeded haltingly during the eighteenth century. American farmers increasingly exported foodstuffs to Europe as the French Revolutionary Wars devastated the continent between 1793 and 1815. America’s exports rose in value from $20.2 million in 1790 to $108.3 million by 1807. But while exports rose, exorbitant internal transportation costs hindered substantial economic development within the United States. In 1816, for instance, $9 could move one ton of goods across the Atlantic Ocean, but only 30 miles across land. An 1816 Senate Committee Report lamented that “the price of land carriage is too great” to allow the profitable production of American manufactures. But in the wake of the War of 1812, Americans rushed to build a new national infrastructure, new networks of roads, canals, and railroads. In his 1815 annual message to Congress, President James Madison stressed “the great importance of establishing throughout
our country the roads and canals which can best be executed under national authority.” State governments continued to sponsor the greatest improvements in American transportation, but the federal government’s annual expenditures on internal improvements climbed to a yearly average of $1,323,000 by Andrew Jackson’s presidency.

State legislatures meanwhile pumped capital into the economy by chartering banks and the number of state-chartered banks skyrocketed from 1 in 1783, 266 in 1820, 702 in 1840, to 1,371 in 1860. European capital also helped to build American infrastructure. By 1844, one British traveler declared that “the prosperity of America, her railroads, canals, steam navigation, and banks, are the fruit of English capital.”

Economic growth, however, proceeded unevenly. Depressions devastated the economy in 1819, 1837, and 1857. Each followed rampant speculation—bubbles—in various commodities: land in 1819, land and slaves in 1837, and railroad bonds in 1857. The spread of paper currency untethered the economy from physical signifiers of wealth familiar to the colonial generation – namely land. Counterfeit bills were endemic during this early period of banking, as some individuals sought their own way to capitalize on the nation’s quest for wealth. With so many fake bills circulating, Americans were constantly on the lookout for the “confidence man” and other deceptive characters in the urban landscape. Prostitutes and con men could look like regular honest Americans. Advice literature offered young men and women strategies for avoiding hypocrisy in an attempt to restore the social fiber together. Intimacy in the domestic sphere became more important as duplicity proliferated in the public sphere. Fear of the confidence man, counterfeit bills, and a pending bust created anxiety over the foundation of the capitalist economy. But Americans refused to blame the logic of their new commercial system for these depressions. Instead, they kept pushing “to get forward.”

The so-called “Transportation Revolution” opened for Americans the vast lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1810, for instance, before the rapid explosion of American infrastructure, Margaret Dwight left New Haven, Connecticut, in a wagon headed for Ohio Territory. Her trip was less than 500 miles but took six full weeks to complete. The journey was a terrible ordeal, she said. The roads were “so rocky & so gullied as to be almost
impassable.” Ten days into the journey, at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Dwight said “it appeared to me that we had come to the end of the habitable part of the globe.” She finally concluded that “the reason so few are willing to return from the Western country, is not that the country is so good, but because the journey is so bad.” Nineteen years later, in 1829, English traveler Frances Trollope made the reverse journey across the Allegheny Mountains from Cincinnati to the east coast. At Wheeling, Virginia, her coach encountered the National Road, the first federally funded interstate infrastructure project. The road was smooth and her journey across the Alleghenies was a scenic delight. “I really can hardly conceive a higher enjoyment than a botanical tour among the Alleghany Mountains,” she declared. The ninety miles of National Road was to her “a garden.”

If the two decades between Margaret Dwight’s and Frances Trollope’s journeys transformed the young nation, the pace of change only accelerated in the following years. If a transportation revolution began with improved road networks, it soon incorporated even greater improvements in the ways people and goods moved across the landscape.

New York State completed the Erie Canal in 1825. The 350 mile-long manmade waterway linked the Great Lakes with the Hudson River—and thereby to the Atlantic Ocean. Soon crops grown in the Great Lakes region were carried by water to eastern cities, and goods from emerging eastern factories made the reverse journey to midwestern farmers. The success of New York’s “artificial river” launched a canal-building boom. By 1840 Ohio created two navigable, all-water links from Lake Erie to the Ohio River.

Robert Fulton established the first commercial steam boat service up and down the Hudson River in New York in 1807. Soon thereafter steamboats filled the waters of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Downstream-only routes became watery two-way highways. By 1830, more than 200 steamboats moved up and down western rivers.

The United States’ first long-distance rail line launched from Maryland in 1827. Baltimore’s city government and the state government of Maryland provided half the start-up funds for the new Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Rail Road Company. The B&O’s founders imagined the line as a means to funnel the agricultural products of the trans-Appalachian West to an outlet on the Chesapeake Bay. Similar
motivations led citizens in Philadelphia, Boston, New York City, and Charleston, South Carolina to launch their own rail lines. State and local governments provided the means for the bulk of this initial wave of railroad construction, but economic collapse following the Panic of 1837 made governments wary of such investments. Government supports continued throughout the century, but decades later the public origins of railroads were all but forgotten and the railroad corporation became the most visible embodiment of corporate capitalism.

By 1860 Americans laid more than 30,000 miles of railroads. The ensuing web of rail, roads, and canals meant that few farmers in the Northeast or Midwest had trouble getting goods to urban markets. Railroad development was slower in the South, but there a combination of rail lines and navigable rivers meant that few cotton planters struggled to transport their products to textile mills in the Northeast and in England.

Such internal improvements not only spread goods, they spread information. The “transportation revolution” was followed by a “communications revolution.” The telegraph redefined the limits of human communication. By 1843 Samuel Morse persuaded Congress to fund a forty-mile telegraph line stretching from Washington, D.C. to Baltimore. Within a few short years, during the Mexican-American War, telegraph lines carried news of battlefield events to eastern newspapers within days, in stark contrast to the War of 1812, when the Battle of New Orleans took place nearly two full weeks after Britain and the United States had signed a peace treaty.

The consequences of the transportation and communication revolutions reshaped the lives of Americans. Farmers who previously produced crops mostly for their own family now turned to the market. They earned cash for what they had previously consumed; the purchased the goods they had previously made or went without. Market-based farmers soon accessed credit through by eastern banks, which provided them with both the opportunity to expand their enterprise but left them prone before the risk of catastrophic failure wrought by distant and impersonal market forces. In the Northeast and Midwest, where farm labor was ever in short supply, ambitious farmers invested in new technologies that promised to increase the productivity of the limited labor supply. The years between 1815 and 1850 witnessed an explosion of patents on agricultural technologies. The most famous of these, perhaps, was Cyrus McCormick’s horse-drawn mechanical reaper, which partially mechanized wheat harvesting, and John Deere’s steel-bladed plough, which more easily allowed for the conversion of unbroken ground into fertile farmland.

Most visibly, the market revolution encouraged the growth of cities reshaped the lives of urban workers. In 1820, only two cities in the United States—New
York and Philadelphia—had over 100,000 inhabitants. By 1850, six American cities met that threshold, including Chicago, which had been founded fewer than two decades earlier. New technology and infrastructure paved the way for such growth. The Erie Canal captured the bulk of the trade emerging from the Great Lakes region, securing New York City’s position as the nation’s largest and most economically important city. The steamboat turned St. Louis and Cincinnati into centers of trade, and Chicago rose as it became the railroad hub of the western Great Lakes and Great Plains regions. The geographic center of the nation shifted westward. The development of stream power and the exploitation of Pennsylvania coalfields shifted the locus of American manufacturing. By the 1830s, for instance, New England was losing its competitive advantage as new sources and locations of power opened up in other regions.

Meanwhile, the cash economy eclipsed the old, local, informal systems of barter and trade. Income became the measure of economic worth. Productivity and efficiencies paled before the measure of income. Cash facilitated new impersonal economic relationships and formalized new means of production. Young workers might simply earn wages, for instance, rather than receiving room and board and training as part of apprenticeships. Moreover, a new form of economic organization appeared: the business corporation.

To protect the fortunes and liabilities of entrepreneurs who invested in early industrial endeavors, states offered the privileges of incorporation. A corporate charter allowed investors and directors to avoid personal liability for company debts. The legal status of incorporation had been designed to confer privileges to organizations embarking upon expensive projects explicitly designed for the public good, such as universities, municipalities, and major public works projects. The business corporation was something new. Many Americans distrusted these new, impersonal business organizations whose officers lacked personal responsibility while nevertheless carrying legal rights. Many wanted limits. Thomas Jefferson himself wrote in 1816 that “I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country.” But in *Dartmouth v. Woodward* (1819) the Supreme Court upheld the rights of private corporations when it denied the government of New Hampshire’s attempt to reorganize Dartmouth College on behalf of the common good. Still, suspicions remained. A group of journeymen cordwainers in New Jersey publicly declared in 1835 that they “entirely disapprov[ed] of the incorporation of Companies, for carrying on manual mechanical business, inasmuch as we believe their tendency is to eventuate and produce monopolies, thereby crippling the energies of individual enterprise.”
III. The Decline of Northern Slavery and the Rise of the Cotton Kingdom

The market revolution economic depended upon not just free-labor factories in the north, but slave-labor plantations in the south. By 1832, textile companies made up 88 out of 106 American corporations valued at over $100,000. These textile mills, worked by free labor, nevertheless depended upon southern cotton and the vast new market economy spurred the expansion of the plantation South.

By the early-nineteenth century, states north of the Mason-Dixon Line had taken steps to abolish slavery. Vermont included abolition as a provision of its 1777 state constitution. Pennsylvania’s emancipation act of 1780 stipulated that freed children serve an indenture term of twenty-eight years. Gradualism prompted emancipation but defended the interests of Northern masters and controlled still another generation of black Americans. In 1804 New Jersey became the last of the northern states to adopt gradual emancipation plans. There was no immediate moment of jubilee, as many northern states only promised to liberate future children born to enslaved mothers. Such laws also stipulated that such children remain in indentured servitude to their mother’s master in order to compensate the slaveholder’s loss. James Mars, a young man indentured under this system in Connecticut, risked being thrown in jail when he protested the arrangement that kept him bound to his mother’s master until age twenty five.

Quicker routes to freedom included escape or direct emancipation by masters. But escape was dangerous and voluntary manumission rare. Congress, for instance, made the harboring of a fugitive slave a federal crime by 1793. Hopes for manumission were even slimmer, as few Northern slaveholders emancipated their own slaves. For example, roughly one-fifth of the white families in New York City owned slaves and yet fewer than 80 slaveholders in the city voluntarily manumitted slaves between 1783 and 1800. By 1830, census data suggests that at least 3,500 people were still enslaved in the North. Elderly Connecticut slaves remained in bondage as late as 1848 and in New Jersey until after the Civil War.

Emancipation proceeded slowly, but proceeded nonetheless. A free black population of fewer than 60,000 in 1790 increased to more than 186,000 by 1810. Growing free black communities fought for their civil rights. In a number of New England locales, free African Americans could vote and send their children to public schools. Most northern states
granted black citizens property rights and trial by jury. African Americans owned land and businesses, founded mutual aid societies, established churches, promoted education, developed print culture, and voted.

Nationally, however, the slave population continued to grow, from less than 700,000 in 1790 to more than 1.5 million unfree persons by 1820. The growth of abolition in the north and the acceleration of slavery in the South created growing divisions between North and South. Slavery declined in the North, but became more deeply entrenched in the South, owing in great part to the development of a new profitable staple crop: cotton. Eli Whitney’s cotton gin, a simple hand-cranked device designed to mechanically remove sticky green seeds from short staple cotton, allowed southern planters to dramatically expand cotton production for the national and international markets. Technological innovations elsewhere—water-powered textile factories in England and the American northeast, which could rapidly turn raw cotton into cloth—increased demand for southern cotton and encouraged white Southerners to expand cultivation farther west, to Mississippi River and beyond. Slavery’s profitability had lagged in tobacco planting, but cotton gave it new life. Eager cotton planters invested their new profits in new slaves.

The cotton boom fueled speculation in slavery. Many slave owners leveraged potential profits into loans used to purchase ever increasing numbers of slaves. For example, one 1840 Louisiana Courier ad warned “it is very difficult now to find persons willing to buy slaves from Mississippi or Alabama on account of the fears entertained that such property may be already mortgaged to the banks of the above named states.”

New national and international markets fueled the plantation boom. American cotton exports rose from 150,000 bales in 1815 to 4,541,000 bales in 1859. The Census Bureau’s 1860 Census of Manufactures stated that “the manufacture of cotton constitutes the most striking feature of the industrial history of the last fifty years.” Slave owners shipped their cotton north to textile manufacturers and to northern financers for overseas shipments. Northern insurance brokers and exporters in the Northeast profited greatly.

While the United States ended its legal participation in the global slave trade in 1808, slave traders moved 1,000,000 slaves from the tobacco-producing Upper South to cotton fields in the Lower South between 1790 and 1860. This harrowing trade in human flesh supported middle-class occupations North and South: bankers, doctors, lawyers, insurance brokers, and shipping agents all profited. And of course it facilitated the expansion of northeastern textile mills.

IV. Changes in Labor Organization

While industrialization bypassed much of the American South, southern cotton production nevertheless nurtured industrialization in the Northeast and Midwest. The drive to produce cloth transformed
the American system of labor. In the early republic, laborers in manufacturing might typically have been expected to work at every stage of production. But a new system, “piece work,” divided much of production into discrete steps performed by different workers. In this new system, merchants or investors sent or “put-out” materials to individuals and families to complete at home. These independent laborers then turned over the partially finished goods to the owner to be given to another laborer to finish.

As early as the 1790s, however, merchants in New England began experimenting with machines to replace the “putting-out” system. To effect this transition, merchants and factory owners relied on the theft of British technological knowledge to build the machines they needed. In 1789, for instance, a textile mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island contracted twenty-one-year-old British immigrant Samuel Slater to build a yarn-spinning machine and then a carding machine because he had apprenticed in an English mill and was familiar with English machinery. The fruits of American industrial espionage peaked in 1813 when Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody recreated the powered loom used in the mills of Manchester, England. Lowell had spent two years in Britain observing and touring mills in England. He committed the design of the powered loom to memory so that, no matter how many times British customs officials searched his luggage, he could smuggle England’s industrial know-how into New England.

Lowell’s contribution to American industrialism was not only technological, it was organizational. He helped reorganize and centralize the American manufacturing process. A new approach, the Waltham-Lowell System, created the textile mill that defined antebellum New England and American industrialism before the Civil War. The modern American textile mill was fully realized in the planned mill town of Lowell in 1821, four years after Lowell himself died. Powered by the Merrimack River in northern Massachusetts and operated by local farm girls, the mills of Lowell centralized the process of textile manufacturing under one roof. The modern American factory was born. Soon ten thousand workers labored in Lowell alone. Sarah Rice, who worked at the nearby Millbury factory, found it “a noisy place” that was “more confined than I like to be.” Working conditions were harsh for the many desperate “mill girls” who operated the factories relentlessly from sun-up to sun-down. One worker complained that “a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude.” Women struck. They lobbied for better working hours. But the lure of wages was too much. As another worker noted, “very many Ladies...have given up millinery, dressmaking & school keeping for work in the mill.” With a large supply of eager workers, Lowell’s vision brought a rush of capital and entrepreneurs into New England and the first manufacturing boom in the new republic.
The market revolution shook other industries as well. Craftsmen began to understand that new markets increased the demand for their products. Some shoemakers, for instance, abandoned the traditional method of producing custom-built shoes at their home workshop and instead began producing larger quantities of shoes in ready-made sizes to be shipped to urban centers. Manufacturers wanting increased production abandoned the old personal approach of relying upon a single live-in apprentice for labor and instead hired unskilled wage laborers who did not have to be trained in all aspects of making shoes but could simply be assigned a single repeatable aspect of the task. Factories slowly replaced shops. The old paternalistic apprentice system, which involved long-term obligations between apprentice and master, gave way to a more impersonal and more flexible labor system in which unskilled laborers could be hired and fired as the market dictated. A writer in the *New York Observer* in 1826 complained, “The master no longer lives among his apprentices [and] watches over their moral as well as mechanical improvement.” Masters-turned-employers now not only had fewer obligations to their workers, they had a lesser attachment. They no longer shared the bonds of their trade but were subsumed under a new class-based relationships: employers and employees, bosses and workers, capitalists and laborers. On the other hand, workers were freed from the long-term, paternalistic obligations of apprenticeship or the legal subjugation of indentured servitude. They could—theoretically—work when and where they wanted. When men or women made an agreement with an employer to work for wages, they were “left free to apportion among themselves their respective shares, untrammeled… by unwise laws,” as Reverend Alonzo Potter rosily proclaimed in 1840. But while the new labor system was celebrated throughout the northern United States as “free labor,” it was simultaneously lamented by a growing powerless class of laborers.

As the northern United States rushed headlong toward commercialization and an early capitalist economy, many Americans grew uneasy with the growing gap between wealthy businessmen and impoverished wage laborers. Elites like Daniel Webster might defend their wealth and privilege by insisting that all workers could achieve “a career of usefulness and enterprise” if they were “industrious and sober,” but labor activist Seth Luther countered that capitalism created “a cruel system of extraction on the bodies
and minds of the producing classes…for no other object than to enable the ‘rich’ to ‘take care of themselves’ while the poor must work or starve.”

Americans embarked upon their industrial revolution with the expectation that all men could start their careers as humble wage workers but later achieve positions of ownership and stability with hard work. Wage work had traditionally been looked-down upon as a state of dependence, suitable only as a temporary waypoint for young men without resources on their path toward the middle class and the economic success necessary to support a wife and children ensconced within the domestic sphere. Children’s magazines – such as *Juvenile Miscellany* and *Parley’s Magazine* – glorified the prospect of moving up the economic ladder. This “free labor ideology” provided many Northerners with a keen sense of superiority over the slave economy of the southern states.

But the commercial economy often failed in its promise of social mobility. Depressions and downturns might destroy businesses and reduce owners to wage work, but even in times of prosperity unskilled workers might perpetually lack good wages and economic security and therefore had to forever depend upon supplemental income from their wives and young children.

Wage workers—a population disproportionately composed of immigrants and poorer Americans—faced low wages, long hours, and dangerous working conditions. Class conflict developed. Instead of the formal inequality of a master-servant contract, employer and employee entered a contract presumably as equals. But hierarchy was evident: employers had financial security and political power; employees faced uncertainty and powerlessness in the workplace. Dependent upon the whims of their employers, some workers turned to strikes and unions to pool their resources. In 1825 a group of journeymen in Boston formed a Carpenters’ Union to protest their inability “to maintain a family at the present time, with the wages which are now usually given.” Working men organized unions to assert themselves and win both the respect and the resources due to a breadwinner and a citizen.

For the middle-class managers and civic leaders caught between workers and owners, unions enflamed a dangerous antagonism between employers and employees. They countered any claims of inherent class conflict with the ideology of social mobility. Middle-class owners and managers justified their economic privilege as the natural product of superior character traits, including their wide decision-making and hard work. There were not classes of capitalists and laborers in America, they said, there was simply a steady ladder carrying laborers upward into management and ownership. One group of master carpenters denounced their striking journeyman in 1825 with the claim that workers of “industrious and temperate habits, have, in their turn, become thriving and respectable Masters, and the great body of our
Mechanics have been enabled to acquire property and respectability, with a just weight and influence in society.” In an 1856 speech in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Abraham Lincoln had to assure his audience that the country’s commercial transformation had not reduced American laborers to slavery. Southerners, he said “insist that their slaves are far better off than Northern freemen.

What a mistaken view do these men have of Northern labourers! They think that men are always to remain labourers here – but there is no such class. The man who laboured for another last year, this year labours for himself. And next year he will hire others to labour for him.” It was this essential belief that undergirded the northern commitment to “free labor” and won the market revolution much widespread acceptance.

V. Changes in Gender Roles and Family Life

In the first half of the nineteenth century, families in the northern United States increasingly participated in the cash economy created by the market revolution. The first stirrings of industrialization shifted work away from the home. These changes transformed Americans’ notions of what constituted work, and therefore shifted what it meant to be an American woman and an American man. As Americans encountered more goods in stores and produced fewer at home, the ability to remove women and children from work determined a family’s class status. This ideal, of course, ignored the reality of women’s work at home and was possible for only the wealthy. The market revolution therefore not only transformed the economy, it changed the nature of the American family. As the market revolution thrust workers into new systems of production, it redefined gender roles. The market integrated families into a new cash economy, and as Americans purchased more goods in stores and produced fewer at home, the activities of the domestic sphere—the idealized realm of women and children—increasingly signified a family’s class status.

Women and children worked to supplement the low wages of many male workers. Around age eleven or twelve, boys could take jobs as office runners or waiters, earning perhaps a dollar a week to support their parents’ incomes. The ideal of an innocent and protected childhood was a privilege for middle- and upper-class families, who might look down upon poor families. Joseph Tuckerman, a Unitarian minister who served poor Bostonians, lamented the lack of discipline and regularity among poor children: “At one hour they are kept at work to procure fuel, or perform some other service; in the next are allowed to go where they will, and to do what they will.” Prevented from attending school, poor children served instead as economic assets for their destitute families.

Meanwhile, the education received by middle-class children provided a foundation for future economic privilege. As artisans lost control over their trades, young men had a greater incentive to invest time in
education to find skilled positions later in life. Formal schooling was especially important for young men who desired apprenticeships in retail or commercial work. Enterprising instructors established schools to assist “young gentlemen preparing for mercantile and other pursuits, who may wish for an education superior to that usually obtained in the common schools, but different from a college education, and better adapted to their particular business,” such as that organized in 1820 by Warren Colburn of Boston. In response to this need, the Boston School Committee created the English High School (as opposed to the Latin School) that could “give a child an education that shall fit him for active life, and shall serve as a foundation for eminence in his profession, whether Mercantile or Mechanical” beyond that “which our public schools can now furnish.”

Education equipped young women with the tools to live sophisticated, gentile lives. After sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Davis left home in 1816 to attend school, her father explained that the experience would “lay a foundation for your future character & respectability.” After touring the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville praised the independence granted to the young American woman, who had “the great scene of the world…open to her” and whose education prepare her to exercise both reason and moral sense. Middling young women also utilized their education to take positions as school teachers in the expanding common school system. Bristol Academy in Tauten, Maine, for instance, advertised “instruction…in the art of teaching” for female pupils. In 1825, Nancy Denison left Concord Academy with references indicating that she was “qualified to teach with success and profit” and “very cheerfully recommend[ed]” for “that very responsible employment.”

As middle-class youths found opportunities for respectable employment through formal education, poor youths remained in marginalized positions. Their families’ desperate financial state kept them from enjoying the fruits of education. When pauper children did receive teaching through institutions such as the House of Refuge in New York City, they were often simultaneously indentured to successful families to serve as field hands or domestic laborers.
The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in New York City sent its wards to places like Sylvester Lusk’s farm in Enfield, Connecticut. Lusk took boys to learn “the trade and mystery of farming” and girls to learn “the trade and mystery of housewifery.” In exchange for “sufficient Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and Washing, fitting for an Apprentice,” and a rudimentary education, the apprentices promised obedience, morality, and loyalty. Poor children also found work in factories such as Samuel Slater’s textile mills in southern New England. Slater published a newspaper advertisement for “four or five active Lads, about 15 Years of Age to serve as Apprentices in the Cotton Factory.”

And so, during the early-nineteenth century, opportunities for education and employment often depended on a given family’s class. In colonial America, nearly all children worked within their parent’s chosen profession, whether it be agricultural or artisanal. During the market revolution, however, more children were able to postpone employment. Americans aspired to provide a “Romantic Childhood” – a period in which boys and girls were sheltered within the home and nurtured through primary schooling. This ideal was available to families that could survive without their children’s labor. And as such sheltered boys and girls matured, their early experiences often determined whether they entered respectable, well-paying positions or remained as dependent workers with little prospects for social mobility.

Just as children were expected to be sheltered from the adult world of work, American culture expected men and women to assume distinct gender roles as they prepared for marriage and family life. An ideology of “separate spheres” set the public realm—the world of economic production and political life—apart as a male domain, and the world of consumers and domestic life as a female one. (Even non-working women labored by shopping for the household, producing food and clothing, cleaning, educating children, and performing similar activities. But these were considered “domestic” because they did not bring money into the household, although they too were essential to the household’s economic viability.) While reality muddied the ideal, the divide between a private, female world of home and a public, male world of business defined American gender hierarchy.

The idea of separate spheres also displayed a distinct class bias. Middle- and upper-classes reinforced their status by shielding “their” women from the harsh realities of wage labor. Women were to be mothers and educators, not partners in production. But lower-class women continued to contribute directly to the household economy. The middle- and upper-class ideal was only feasible in households where women did not need to engage in paid labor. In poorer households, women engaged in wage labor as factory workers, piece-workers producing items for market consumption, tavern and inn keepers, and domestic servants. While many of the fundamental tasks
women performed remained the same—producing clothing, cultivating vegetables, overseeing dairy production, and performing any number of other domestic labors—the key difference was whether and when they performed these tasks for cash in a market economy.

Domestic expectations constantly changed and the market revolution transformed many women’s traditional domestic tasks. Cloth production, for instance, advanced throughout the market revolution as new mechanized production increased the volume and variety of fabrics available to ordinary people. This relieved many better-off women of a traditional labor obligation. As cloth production became commercialized, women’s home-based cloth production became less important to household economies. Purchasing cloth, and later, ready-made clothes, began to transform women from producers to consumers. One woman from Maine, Martha Ballard, regularly referenced spinning, weaving, and knitting in the diary she kept from 1785 to 1812. Martha, her daughters, and female neighbors spun and plied linen and woolen yarns and used them to produce a variety of fabrics to make clothing for her family. The production of cloth and clothing was a year-round, labor-intensive process, but it was for home consumption, not commercial markets.

In cities, where women could buy cheap imported cloth to turn into clothing, they became skilled consumers. They stewarded their husbands’ money by comparing values and haggling over prices. In one typical experience, Mrs. Peter Simon, a captain’s wife, inspected twenty-six yards of Holland cloth to ensure it was worth the £130 price. Even wealthy women shopped for high-value goods. While servants or slaves routinely made low-value purchases, the mistress of the household trusted her discriminating eye alone for expensive or specific purchases.

Women might also parlay their feminine skills into businesses. In addition to working as seamstresses, milliners, or laundresses, women might undertake paid work for neighbors or acquaintances or combine clothing production with management of a boarding house. Even slaves with particular skill at producing clothing could be hired out for a higher price, or might even negotiate to work part-time for themselves. Most slaves, however, continued to produce domestic items, including simpler cloths and clothing, for home consumption.

Similar domestic expectations played out in the slave states. Enslaved women labored in the fields.
Whites argued that African American women were less delicate and womanly than white women and therefore perfectly suited for agricultural labor. The southern ideal meanwhile established that white plantation mistresses were shielded from manual labor because of their very whiteness. Throughout the slave states, however, aside from the minority of plantations with dozens of slaves, the majority of white women by necessity continued to assist with planting, harvesting, and processing agricultural projects despite the cultural stigma attached to it. White southerners continued to produce large portions of their food and clothing at home. Even when they were market-oriented producers of cash crops, white southerners still insisted that their adherence to plantation slavery and racial hierarchy made them morally superior to greedy Northerners and their callous, cutthroat commerce. Southerners and northerners increasingly saw their ways of life as incompatible.

While the market revolution remade many women’s economic roles, their legal status remained essentially unchanged. Upon marriage, women were rendered legally dead by the notion of coverture, the custom that counted married couples as a single unit represented by the husband. Without special precautions or interventions, women could not earn their own money, own their own property, sue, or be sued. Any money earned or spent belonged by law to their husbands. Women shopped on their husbands’ credit and at any time husbands could terminate their wives’ access to their credit. Although a handful of states made divorce available—divorce had before only been legal in Congregationalist states such as Massachusetts and Connecticut, where marriage was strictly a civil contract, rather than a religious one—it remained extremely expensive, difficult, and rare. Marriage was typically a permanently binding legal contract.

Ideas of marriage, if not the legal realities, began to change. This period marked the beginning of the shift from “institutional” to “companionate” marriage. Institutional marriages were primarily labor arrangements that maximized the couple’s and their children’s chances of surviving and thriving. Men and women assessed each other’s skills as they related to household production, although looks and personality certainly entered into the equation. But in the late-eighteenth century, under the influence by Enlightenment thought, young people began to privilege character and compatibility in their potential partners. Money was still essential: marriages prompted the largest redistributions of property prior to the settling of estates at death. But the means of this redistribution was changing. Especially in the North, land became a less important foundation for matchmaking as wealthy young men became not only farmers and merchants but bankers, clerks, or professionals. The increased emphasis on affection and attraction that young people embraced was facilitated by an increasingly complex economy that offered new ways to store, move, and create wealth,
which liberalized the criteria by which families evaluated potential in-laws.

To be considered a success in family life, a middle-class American man typically aspired to own a comfortable home and to marry a woman of strong morals and religious conviction who would take responsibility for raising virtuous, well-behaved children. The duties of the middle-class husband and wife would be clearly delineated into separate spheres. The husband alone was responsible for creating wealth and engaging in the commerce and politics—the public sphere. The wife was responsible for the private—keeping a good home, being careful with household expenses, raising children, and inculcating them with the middle class virtues that would ensure their future success. But for poor families sacrificing the potential economic contributions of wives and children was an impossibility.

VI. The Rise of Industrial Labor in Antebellum America

More than five million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1820 and 1860. Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants sought new lives and economic opportunities. By the Civil War, nearly one out of every eight Americans had been born outside of the United States. A series of push and pull factors drew immigrants to the United States.

In England, an economic slump prompted Parliament to modernize British agriculture by revoking common land rights for Irish farmers. These policies generally targeted Catholics in the southern counties of Ireland and motivated many to seek greater opportunity and the booming American economy pulled Irish immigrants towards ports along the eastern United States. Between 1820 and 1840, over 250,000 Irish immigrants arrived in the United States. Without the capital and skills required to purchase and operate farms, Irish immigrants settled primarily in northeastern cities and towns and performed
unskilled work. Irish men usually emigrated alone and, when possible, practiced what became known as chain migration. Chain migration allowed Irish men to send portions of their wages home, which would then be used to either support their families in Ireland or to purchase tickets for relatives to come to the United States. Irish immigration followed this pattern into the 1840s and 1850s, when the infamous Irish Famine sparked a massive exodus out of Ireland. Between 1840 and 1860, 1.7 million Irish fled starvation and the oppressive English policies that accompanied it. As they entered manual, unskilled labor positions in urban America’s dirtiest and most dangerous occupations, Irish workers in northern cities were compared to African Americans and nativist newspapers portrayed them with ape-like features. Despite hostility, Irish immigrants retained their social, cultural, and religious beliefs and left an indelible mark on American culture.

While the Irish settled mostly in coastal cities, most German immigrants used American ports and cities as temporary waypoints before settling in the rural countryside. Over 1.5 million immigrants from the various German states arrived in the United States during the antebellum era. Although some southern Germans fled declining agricultural conditions and repercussions of the failed revolutions of 1848, many Germans simply sought steadier economic opportunity. German immigrants tended to travel as families and carried with them skills and capital that enabled them to enter middle class trades. Germans migrated to the Old Northwest to farm in rural areas and practiced trades in growing communities such as St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee, three cities that formed what came to be called the German Triangle.

Most German immigrants were Catholics, but many were Jewish. Although records are sparse, New York’s Jewish population rose from approximately 500 in 1825 to 40,000 in 1860. Similar gains were seen in other American cities. Jewish immigrants, hailing from southwestern Germany and parts of occupied Poland, moved to the United States through chain migration and as family units. Unlike other Germans, Jewish immigrants rarely settled in rural areas. Once established, Jewish immigrants found work in retail, commerce, and artisanal occupations such as tailoring. They quickly found their footing and established themselves as an intrinsic part of the American market economy. Just as Irish immigrants shaped the urban landscape through the construction of churches and Catholic schools, Jewish immigrants erected synagogues and made their mark on American culture.

The sudden influx of immigration triggered a backlash among many native-born Anglo-Protestant Americans. This nativist movement, especially fearful of the growing Catholic presence, sought to limit European immigration and prevent Catholics from establishing churches and other institutions. Popular in northern cities such as Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities with large Catholic
populations, nativism even spawned its own political party in the 1850s. The American Party, more commonly known as the “Know-Nothing Party,” found success in local and state elections throughout the North. The party even nominated candidates for President in 1852 and 1856. The rapid rise of the Know-Nothings, reflecting widespread anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiment, slowed European immigration. Immigration declined precipitously after 1855 as nativism, the Crimean War, and improving economic conditions in Europe discouraged potential migrants from traveling to the United States. Only after the American Civil War would immigration levels match, and eventually surpass, the levels seen in the 1840s and 1850s.

In industrial northern cities, Irish immigrants swelled the ranks of the working class and quickly encountered the politics of industrial labor. Many workers formed trade unions during the early republic. Organizations such as the Philadelphia’s Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers or the Carpenters’ Union of Boston operated in within specific industries in major American cities and worked to protect the economic power of their members by creating closed shops—workplaces wherein employers could only hire union members—and striking to improve working conditions. Political leaders denounced these organizations as unlawful combinations and conspiracies to promote the narrow self-interest of workers above the rights of property holders and the interests of the common good.

Unions did not become legally acceptable—and then only haltingly—until 1842 when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of a union organized among Boston bootmakers, arguing that the workers were capable of acting “in such a manner as best to subserve their own interests.”

In the 1840s, labor activists organized to limit working hours and protect children in factories. The New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen (NEA) mobilized to establish a ten-hour day across industries. They argued that the ten-hour day would improve the immediate conditions of laborers by allowing “time and opportunities for intellectual and moral improvement.” After a city-wide strike in Boston in 1835, the Ten-Hour Movement quickly spread to other major cities such as Philadelphia. The campaign for leisure time was part of the male working-class effort to expose the
Women, a dominant labor source for factories since the early 1800s, launched some of the earliest strikes for better conditions. Textile operatives in Lowell, Massachusetts, “turned-out” (walked off) their jobs in 1834 and 1836. During the Ten-Hour Movement of the 1840s, female operatives provided crucial support. Under the leadership of Sarah Bagley, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association organized petition drives that drew thousands of signatures from “mill girls.” Like male activists, Bagley and her associates used the desire for mental improvement as a central argument for reform. An 1847 editorial in the *Voice of Industry*, a labor newspaper published by Bagley, asked “who, after thirteen hours of steady application to monotonous work, can sit down and apply her mind to deep and long continued thought?”

Despite the widespread support for a ten-hour day, the movement achieved only partial success. President Van Buren established a ten-hour-day policy for laborers on federal public works projects. New Hampshire passed a state-wide law in 1847 and Pennsylvania following a year later. Both states, however, allowed workers to voluntarily consent to work more than ten hours per day.

In 1842, child labor became a dominant issue in the American labor movement. The protection of child laborers gained more middle-class support, especially in New England, than the protection of adult workers. A petition from parents in Fall River, a southern Massachusetts mill town that employed a high portion of child workers, asked the legislature for a law “prohibiting the employment of children in manufacturing establishments at an age and for a number of hours which must be permanently injurious to their health and inconsistent with the education which is essential to their welfare.” Massachusetts quickly passed a law prohibiting children under the age of twelve from working more than ten hours a day. By the mid-nineteenth century, every state in New England had followed Massachusetts’ lead. Between the 1840s and 1860s, these statutes slowly extended the age of protection of labor and the assurance of schooling. Throughout the region, public officials agreed that young children (between nine and twelve years) should be prevented from working in dangerous occupations, and older children (between twelve and fifteen years) should balance their labor with education and time for leisure.

Male workers, sought to improve their income and working conditions to create a household that kept women and children protected within the domestic sphere. But labor gains were limited and movement itself remained moderate. Despite its challenge to industrial working conditions, labor activism in antebellum America remained largely wedded to the free labor ideal. The labor movement supported the northern free soil movement, which challenged the spread of slavery, that emerged during the 1840s, simultaneously promoting the superiority of the north-
ern system of commerce over the southern institution of slavery while trying, much less successfully, to reform capitalism.

VII. Conclusion
During the early nineteenth century, southern agriculture produced by slaves fueled northern industry produced by wage workers and managed by the new middle class. New transportation, new machinery, and new organizations of labor integrated the previously isolated pockets of the colonial economy into a national industrial operation. Industrialization and the cash economy tied diverse regions together at the same time ideology was driving Americans apart. By celebrating the freedom of contract that distinguished the wage worker from the indentured servant of previous generations or the slave in the southern cotton field, political leaders claimed the American Revolution’s legacy for the North. But the rise of industrial child labor, the demands of workers to unionize, the economic vulnerability of women, and the influx of non-Anglo immigrants left many Americans questioning the meaning of liberty after the market revolution.

Content provided by The American Yawp
I. Introduction

The early nineteenth century was a period of immense change in the United States. Economic, political, demographic, and territorial transformations radically altered how Americans thought about themselves, their communities, and the rapidly expanding nation. It was a period of great optimism, with the possibilities of self-governance infusing everything from religion to politics. Yet it was also a period of great discord, as the benefits of industrialization and democratization increasingly accrued along starkly uneven lines of gender, race, and class. Westward expansion distanced urban dwellers from frontier settlers more than ever before, even as the technological innovations of industrialization—like the telegraph and railroads—offered exciting new ways to maintain communication. The spread of democracy opened the franchise to nearly all white men, but urbanization and a dramatic influx of European migration increased social tensions and class divides.

Americans looked on these changes with a mixture of enthusiasm and suspicion, wondering how the moral fabric of the new nation would hold up to emerging social challenges. Increasingly, many turned to two powerful tools to help understand and manage the various transformations: spiritual revivalism and social reform. Reacting to the rationalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the religious revivals
of the Second Great Awakening reigned Protestant spirituality during the early nineteenth century. The revivals incorporated worshippers into an expansive religious community that crisscrossed all regions of the United States and armed them with a potent evangelical mission. Many emerged from these religious revivals with a conviction that human society could be changed to look more heavenly. They joined their spiritual networks to rapidly developing social reform networks that sought to alleviate social ills and eradicate moral vice. Tackling numerous issues, including alcoholism, slavery, and the inequality of women, reformers worked tirelessly to remake the world around them. While not all these initiatives were successful, the zeal of reform and the spiritual rejuvenation that inspired it were key facets of antebellum life and society.

II. Revival and Religious Change

In the early nineteenth century, a succession of religious revivals collectively known as the Second Great Awakening remade the nation’s religious landscape. Revivalist preachers traveled on horseback, sharing the message of spiritual and moral renewal to as many as possible. Residents of urban centers, rural farmlands, and frontier territories alike flocked to religious revivals and camp meetings, where intense physical and emotional enthusiasm accompanied evangelical conversion.

The Second Great Awakening emerged in response to powerful intellectual and social currents. Camp meetings captured the democratizing spirit of the American Revolution, but revivals also provided a unifying moral order and new sense of spiritual community for Americans struggling with the great changes of the day. The market revolution, western expansion, and European immigration all challenged traditional bonds of authority, and evangelicalism promised equal measures of excitement and order. Revivals spread like wildfire throughout the United States, swelling church membership, spawning new Christian denominations, and inspiring social reform.

One of the earliest and largest revivals of the Second Great Awakening occurred in Cane Ridge, Kentucky over a one-week period in August 1801. The Cane Ridge Revival drew thousands of people, and possibly as many as one of every ten residents of Kentucky. Though large crowds had previously gathered annually in rural areas each late summer or fall to receive Communion, this assembly was very different. Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian preachers all delivered passionate sermons, exhorting the crowds to strive for their own salvation. They preached from inside buildings, evangelized outdoors under the open sky, and even used tree stumps as makeshift pulpits, all to reach their enthusiastic audiences in any way possible. Women, too, exhorted, in a striking break with common practice. Attendees, moved by the preachers’ fervor, responded by crying, jumping, speaking in tongues, or even fainting.
Events like the Cane Ridge Revival did spark significant changes in Americans’ religious affiliations. Many revivalists abandoned the comparatively formal style of worship observed in the well-established Congregationalist and Episcopalian churches, and instead embraced more impassioned forms of worship that included the spontaneous jumping, shouting, and gesturing found in new and alternative denominations. The ranks of Christian denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians swelled precipitously alongside new denominations such as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The evangelical fire reached such heights, in fact, that one swath of western and central New York state came to be known as the “Burned-Over District.” Charles Grandison Finney, the influential revivalist preacher who first coined the term, explained that the residents of this area had experienced so many revivals by different religious groups that there were no more souls to awaken to the fire of spiritual conversion.

Within the “spiritual marketplace” created by religious disestablishment, Methodism achieved the most remarkable success. Methodism experienced the most significant denominational increase in American history and was by far the most popular American denomination by 1850. The Methodist denomination grew from fewer than one thousand members at the end of the eighteenth century to constitute thirty-four percent of all American church membership by the mid-nineteenth century. After its leaders broke with the Church of England to form a new, American denomination in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) achieved its growth through innovation. Methodists used itinerant preachers, known as circuit riders. These men (and the occasional woman) won converts by pushing west with the expanding United States over the Alleghenies and into the Ohio River Valley, bringing religion to new settlers hungry to have their spiritual needs attended. Circuit riding took preachers into homes, meetinghouses, and churches, all mapped out at regular intervals that collectively took about two weeks to complete.

Revolutionary ideals also informed a substantial theological critique of orthodox Calvinism that had far-reaching consequences for religious individuals and for society as a whole. Calvinism began to seem too pessimistic for many American Christians. Worshippers increasingly began to take responsibility for their own spiritual fates by embracing theologies that emphasized human action in effecting salvation, and revivalist preachers were quick to recognize the importance of these cultural shifts. Radical revivalist preachers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, put theological issues aside and evangelized by appealing to worshippers’ hearts and emotions. Even more conservative spiritual leaders, such as Lyman Beecher of the Congregational church, appealed to younger generations of Americans by adopting a less orthodox approach to Calvinist
doctrine. Though these men did not see eye to eye, they both contributed to the emerging consensus that all souls are equal in salvation and that all people can be saved by surrendering to God. This idea of spiritual egalitarianism was one of the most important transformations to emerge out of the Second Great Awakening.

Spiritual egalitarianism dovetailed neatly with an increasingly democratic United States. In the process of winning independence from Britain, the Revolution weakened the power of long-standing social hierarchies and the codes of conduct that went along with them. From the institutional side, its democratizing ethos opened the door for a more egalitarian approach to spiritual leadership. Whereas preachers of longstanding denominations like the Congregationalists were required to have a divinity degree and at least some theological training in order to become spiritual leaders, many alternative denominations only required a conversion experience and a supernatural “call to preach.” This meant, for example, that a twenty-year-old man could go from working in a mill to being a full-time circuit-riding preacher for the Methodists practically overnight. Indeed, it was their emphasis on spiritual egalitarianism over formal training that enabled Methodists to outpace spiritual competition during this period. Methodists attracted more new preachers to send into the field, and the lack of formal training meant that individual preachers could be paid significantly less than a Congregationalist preacher with a divinity degree.

In addition to the divisions between evangelical and non-evangelical denominations wrought by the Second Great Awakening, the revivals and subsequent evangelical growth also revealed strains within the Methodist and Baptist churches. Each witnessed several schisms during the 1820s and 1830s as reformers advocated for a return to the practices and policies of an earlier generation, which they charged that church leaders had compromised. Many others left mainstream Protestantism altogether, opting instead to form their own churches. Some, like Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, proposed a return to (or “restoration” of) New Testament Christianity, stripped of centuries of additional teachings and practices. Other restorationists built on the foundation laid by the evangelical churches by using their methods and means to both critique the Protestant mainstream and move beyond the accepted boundaries of contemporary Christian orthodoxy. Self-declared prophets claimed that God had called them to establish new churches and introduce new (or, in their understanding, restore lost) teachings, forms of worship, and even scripture.

Mormon founder Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision in a grove of trees near his boyhood home in upstate New York and commanded him to “join none of [the existing churches], for they are all wrong.” Subsequent visitations from angelic beings revealed to Smith the location of a buried record, purportedly containing the writings and
histories of an ancient Christian civilization on the American continent. Smith published the Book of Mormon in early 1830, and organized the Church of Christ (later renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) a short time later. Borrowing from the Methodists a faith in the abilities of itinerant preachers without formal training, Smith dispatched early converts as missionaries to take the message of the Book of Mormon throughout the United States, across the ocean to England and Ireland, and eventually even further abroad. He attracted a sizeable number of followers on both sides of the Atlantic and commanded them to gather to a center place, where they collectively anticipated the imminent second coming of Christ. Continued growth and near-constant opposition from both Protestant ministers and neighbors suspicious of their potential political power forced the Mormons to move several times, first from New York to Ohio, then to Missouri, and finally to Illinois, where they established a thriving community on the banks of the Mississippi River. In Nauvoo, as they called their city, Smith moved even further beyond the bounds of the Christian orthodoxy by continuing to pronounce additional revelations and introducing secret rites to be performed in Mormon temples. Most controversially, Smith and a select group of his most loyal followers began taking additional wives (Smith himself married at least 30 other women). Although Mormon polygamy was not publicly acknowledged and openly practiced until 1852 (when the Mormons had moved yet again, this time to the protective confines of the intermountain west on the shores of the Great Salt Lake), rumors of Smith’s involvement circulated almost immediately after its quiet introduction, and played a part in the motivations of the mob that eventually murdered the Mormon prophet in the summer of 1844.

Mormons were not the only religious community in antebellum America to challenge the domestic norms of the era through radical sexual experiments: Shakers strictly enforced celibacy in their several communes scattered throughout New England and the upper Midwest, while John Humphrey Noyes introduced free love (or “complex marriage”) to his Oneida community in upstate New York. Others challenged existing cultural customs in less radical ways. For individual worshippers, spiritual egalitarianism in revivals and camp meetings could break down traditional social conventions. For example, revivals generally admitted both men and women. Furthermore, in an era when many American Protestants discouraged or outright forbade women from speaking in church meetings, some preachers provided women with new opportunities to openly express themselves and participate in spiritual communities. This was particularly true in the Methodist and Baptist traditions, though by the mid-nineteenth century most of these opportunities would be curtailed as these denominations attempted to move away from radical revivalism and towards the status of respectable denominations. Some preachers also promoted racial integration in religious gatherings, expressing equal concern for white and
black people’s spiritual salvation and encouraging both slaveholders and the enslaved to attend the same meetings. Historians have even suggested that the extreme physical and vocal manifestations of conversion seen at impassioned revivals and camp meetings offered the ranks of worshippers a way to enact a sort of social leveling by flouting the codes of self-restraint prescribed by upper-class elites. Although the revivals did not always live up to such progressive ideals in practice, particularly in the more conservative regions of the slave holding South, the concept of spiritual egalitarianism nonetheless challenged and changed the ways that Protestant Americans thought about themselves, their God, and one another.

As the borders of the United States expanded during the nineteenth century and as new demographic changes altered urban landscapes, revivalism also offered worshippers a source of social and religious structure to help cope with change. Revival meetings held by itinerant preachers offered community and collective spiritual purpose to migrant families and communities isolated from established social and religious institutions. In urban centers, where industrialization and European famines brought growing numbers of domestic and foreign migrants, evangelical preachers provided moral order and spiritual solace to an increasingly anonymous population. Additionally, and quite significantly, the Second Great Awakening armed evangelical Christians with a moral purpose to address and eradicate the many social problems they saw as arising from these dramatic demographic shifts.

Not all American Christians, though, were taken with the revivals. The early nineteenth century also saw the rise of Unitarianism as a group of ministers and their followers came to reject key aspects of “orthodox” Protestant belief including the divinity of Christ. Christians in New England were particularly involved in the debates surrounding Unitarianism as Harvard University became a hotly contested center of cultural authority between Unitarians and Trinitarians. Unitarianism had important effects on the world of reform when a group of Unitarian ministers founded the Transcendental Club in 1836. The club met for four years and included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Frederic Henry Hedge, George Ripley, Orestes Brownson, James Freeman Clarke, and Theodore Parker. While initially limited to ministers or former ministers—except for the eccentric Alcott—the club quickly expanded to include numerous literary intellectuals. Among these were the author Henry David Thoreau, the proto-feminist and literary critic Margaret Fuller, and the educational reformer Elizabeth Peabody.

Transcendentalism had no established creed, but this was intentional. What united the Transcendentalists was their belief in a higher spiritual principle within each person that could be trusted to discover truth, guide moral action, and inspire art. They often referred to this principle as “Soul,” “Spirit,”
“Mind,” or “Reason.” Deeply influenced by British Romanticism and German idealism’s celebration of individual artistic inspiration, personal spiritual experience, and aspects of human existence not easily explained by reason or logic, the Transcendentalists established an enduring legacy precisely because they developed distinctly American ideas that emphasized individualism, optimism, oneness with nature, and a modern orientation toward the future rather than the past. These themes resonated in an American nineteenth century where political democracy and readily available land distinguished the United States from Europe.

Ralph Waldo Emerson espoused a religious worldview wherein God, “the eternal ONE,” manifested through the special harmony between the individual soul and nature. In “The American Scholar” (1837) and “Self-Reliance” (1841), Emerson emphasized the utter reliability and sufficiency of the individual soul, and exhorted his audience to overcome “our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands.” Emerson believed that the time had come for Americans to declare their intellectual independence from Europe. Henry David Thoreau espoused a similar enthusiasm for simple living, communion with nature, and self-sufficiency. Thoreau’s sense of rugged individualism, perhaps the strongest among even the Transcendentalists, also yielded “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849). Several of the Transcendentalists also participated in communal living experiments. For example, in the mid-1840s, George Ripley and other members of the utopian Brook Farm community began to espouse Fourierism, a vision of society based upon cooperative principles, as an alternative to capitalist conditions.

Many of these different types of response to the religious turmoil of the time had a similar endpoint in the embrace of voluntary associations and social reform work. During the antebellum period, many American Christians responded to the moral anxiety of industrialization and urbanization by organizing to address specific social needs. Social problems such as intemperance, vice, and crime assumed a new and distressing scale that older solutions, such as almshouses, were not equipped to handle. Moralists grew concerned about the growing mass of urban residents who did not attend church, and who, thanks to poverty or illiteracy, did not even have access to Scripture. Voluntary benevolent societies exploded in number to tackle these issues. Led by ministers and dominated by middle-class women, voluntary societies printed and distributed Protestant tracts, taught Sunday school, distributed outdoor relief, and evangelized in both frontier towns and urban slums. These associations and their evangelical members also lent moral backing and manpower to large-scale social reform projects, including the temperance movement designed to curb Americans’ consumption of alcohol, the abolitionist campaign to eradicate slavery in the United States, and women’s rights agitation to improve women’s political and economic rights. As such
wide-ranging reform projects combined with missionary zeal, evangelical Christians formed a “benevolent empire” that swiftly became a cornerstone of the antebellum period.

III. Atlantic Origins of Reform Change

The reform movements that emerged in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century were not American inventions. Instead, these movements were rooted in a transatlantic world where both sides of the ocean faced similar problems and together collaborated to find similar solutions. Many of the same factors that spurred American reformers to action—such as urbanization, industrialization, and class struggle—equally affected Europe. Reformers on both sides of the Atlantic visited and corresponded with one another, exchanging ideas and building networks that proved crucial to shared causes like abolition and women’s rights.

Deepening ties between reformers across the Atlantic owed not just to the emergence of new ideas, but also to the material connection of the early nineteenth century. Improvements in transportation, including the introduction of the steamboat, canals, and railroads, connected people not just across the United States, but also with other like-minded reformers in Europe. (Ironically, the same technologies also helped ensure that even after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the British remained heavily invested in slavery, both directly and indirectly.)

Equally important, the reduction of publication costs created by the printing technologies of the 1830s allowed reformers to reach new audiences across the world. Almost immediately after its publication in the United States, for instance, the escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass’s autobiography was republished in Europe and translated into French and Dutch, galvanizing Douglass’s supporters across the Atlantic.

Such exchanges began as part of the larger processes of colonialism and empire-building. Missionary organizations from the colonial era had created many of these transatlantic links that were further developed by the Atlantic travel of major figures such as George Whitefield during the First Great Awakening. By the early national period, these networks had changed as a result of the American Revolution but still revealed spiritual and personal connections between religious individuals and organizations in the United States and Great Britain, in particular. These connections can be seen in multiple areas. Mission work continued to be a joint effort, with American and European missionary societies in close correspondence throughout the early nineteenth century as they coordinated domestic and foreign evangelistic missions. The transportation and print revolutions meant that news of British missionary efforts in India and Tahiti could be quickly printed in American religious periodicals, galvanizing American efforts to evangelize among Native Americans, frontier settlers, immigrant groups, and even overseas.
In addition to missions, anti-slavery work had a decidedly transatlantic cast from its very beginnings. American Quakers began to question slavery as early as the late-17th century, and worked with British reformers in the successful campaign that ended the slave trade, and then slavery itself, in the early nineteenth century. Before, during, and after the Revolution, many Americans continued to admire European thinkers. Influence extended both east and west. By foregrounding questions about rights, the American Revolution helped inspire British abolitionists, who in turn offered support to their American counterparts. American antislavery activists developed close relationships with British abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson, Daniel O’Connell, and Joseph Sturge. Prominent American abolitionists such as Theodore Dwight Weld, Lucretia Mott, and William Lloyd Garrison were converted to the antislavery idea of immediatism—that is, the demand for emancipation without delay—by British abolitionists Elizabeth Heyrick and Charles Stuart. Although Anglo-American antislavery networks reached back to the late-eighteenth century, they dramatically grew in support and strength over the antebellum period, as evidenced by the General Antislavery Convention of 1840. This antislavery delegation consisted of more than 500 abolitionists, mostly coming from France, England, and the United States. All met together in England, united by their common goal of ending slavery in their time. Although abolitionism was not the largest American reform movement of the antebellum period (that honor belongs to temperance), it did foster greater cooperation among reformers in England and the United States.

In the course of their abolitionist activities, many American women began to establish contact with their counterparts across the Atlantic, each group penning articles and contributing material support to the others’ antislavery publications and fundraisers. The effect of this cooperation can be seen in the nascent women’s rights movement. During the 1840 London meeting, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formulated the idea for a national women’s suffrage convention, which they held at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The General Antislavery Convention played an important role in laying the foundation for an Anglo-American Women’s Suffrage Movement. In her history of the woman suffrage
movement, Stanton would mark the Convention as the beginning of that movement.

The bonds between British and American reformers can be traced throughout the many social improvement projects of the nineteenth century. Transatlantic cooperation galvanized efforts to reform individuals’ and societies’ relationships to alcohol, labor, religion, education, commerce, and land ownership. This cooperation, stemming from the recognition that social problems on both sides of the Atlantic were strikingly similar, helped American reformers to conceptualize themselves as part of a worldwide moral mission to attack social ills and spread the gospel of Christianity.

IV. The Benevolent Empire

After religious disestablishment, citizens of the United States faced a dilemma: how to cultivate a moral and virtuous public without aid from state-sponsored religion. Most Americans agreed that a good and moral citizenry was essential for the national project to succeed, but many shared the perception that society’s moral foundation was weakening. Narratives of moral and social decline, known as jeremiads, had long been embedded in Protestant story-telling traditions, but jeremiads took on new urgency in the antebellum period. In the years immediately following disestablishment, “traditional” Protestant Christianity was at low tide, while the Industrial Revolution and the spread of capitalism had led to a host of social problems associated cities and commerce. The Second Great Awakening was in part a spiritual response to such changes, revitalizing Christian spirits through the promise of salvation. The revivals also provided an institutional antidote to the insecurities of a rapidly changing world by inspiring an immense and widespread movement for social reform. Growly directly out of nineteenth-century revivalism, networks of reform societies proliferated throughout the United States between 1815 and 1861, melding religion and reform into a powerful force in American culture known as the “benevolent empire.”

The benevolent empire departed from revivalism’s early populism, as middle class ministers dominated the leadership of antebellum reform societies. Due to the economic forces of the market revolution, it was the middle-class evangelicals who had the time and resources to devote to reforming efforts. Often, that reform focused on creating and maintaining respectable middle-class culture throughout the United States. Middle-class women, in particular, were able to play a leading role in reform activity. They became increasingly responsible for the moral maintenance of their homes and communities, and their leadership signaled a dramatic departure from previous generations when such prominent roles for ordinary women would have been unthinkable.

Different forces within evangelical Protestantism combined to encourage reform. One of the great lights of benevolent reform was Charles Grandison Finney, the radical revivalist, who promoted a movement
known as “perfectionism.” Premised on the belief that truly redeemed Christians would be motivated to live free of sin and reflect the perfection of God himself, his wildly popular revivals encouraged his converted followers to join reform movements and create God’s kingdom on earth. The idea of “disinterested benevolence” also turned many evangelicals toward reform. Preachers championing disinterested benevolence argued that true Christianity requires that a person give up self-love in favor of loving others. Though perfectionism and disinterested benevolence were the most prominent forces encouraging benevolent societies, some preachers achieved the same end in their advocacy of postmillennialism. In this worldview, Christ’s return was foretold to occur after humanity had enjoyed one thousand years’ peace, and it was the duty of converted Christians to improve the world around them in order to pave the way for Christ’s redeeming return. Though ideological and theological issues like these divided Protestants into more and more sects, church leaders often worked on an interdenominational basis to establish benevolent societies and draw their followers into the work of social reform.

Under the leadership of preachers and ministers, reform societies attacked many social problems. Those concerned about drinking could join temperance societies; other groups focused on eradicating dueling and gambling. Evangelical reformers might support home or foreign missions or Bible and tract societies. Sabbatarians fought tirelessly to end non-religious activity on the Sabbath. Moral reform societies sought to end prostitution and redeem “fallen women.” Over the course of the antebellum period, voluntary associations and benevolent activists also worked to reform bankruptcy laws, prison systems, insane asylums, labor laws, and education. They built orphanages and free medical dispensaries, and developed programs to provide professional services like social work, job placement, and day camps for children in the slums.

Frequently, these organizations shared membership as individuals found themselves interested in a wide range of reform movements. This overlapping membership contributed to the sense of the groups as forming an empire of benevolence, particularly during Anniversary Week, when many of the major reform groups coordinated the schedules of their annual meetings in New York or Boston to allow individuals to attend multiple meetings in a single trip.
Among all the social reform movements associated with the benevolent empire, the temperance crusade was the most successful. Championed by prominent preachers like Lyman Beecher, the movement’s effort to curb the consumption of alcohol galvanized widespread support among the middle class. Alcohol consumption became a significant social issue after the American Revolution. Commercial distilleries produced readily available, cheap whiskey that was frequently more affordable than milk or beer and safer than water, and hard liquor became a staple beverage in many lower- and middle-class households. Consumption among adults skyrocketed in the early nineteenth century, and alcoholism had become an endemic problem across the United States by the 1820s. As alcoholism became an increasingly visible issue in towns and cities, most reformers escalated their efforts from advocating moderation in liquor consumption to full abstinence from all alcohol. Many reformers saw intemperance as the biggest impediment to maintaining order and morality in the young republic. Temperance reformers saw a direct correlation between alcohol and other forms of vice targeted by voluntary societies, and, most importantly, felt that it endangered family life. In 1826, evangelical ministers organized the American Temperance Society to help spread the crusade more effectively on a national level. It supported lecture campaigns, produced temperance literature, and organized revivals specifically aimed at encouraging worshippers to give up the drink. It was so successful that, within a decade, it established five thousand branches and grew to over a million members. Temperance reformers pledged not to touch the bottle, and canvassed their neighborhoods and towns to encourage others to join their “Cold Water Army.” They also targeted the law, successfully influencing lawmakers in several states to prohibit the sale of liquor.

In response to the perception that heavy drinking was associated with men who abused, abandoned, or neglected their family obligations, women formed a significant presence in societies dedicated to eradicating liquor. Temperance became a hallmark of middle-class respectability among both men and women and developed into a crusade with a visible class character. As with many of the reform efforts championed by the middle class, temperance threatened to intrude on the private family life of lower-class workers, many of whom were Irish Catholics. Such intrusions by the Protestant middle-class exacerbated class, ethnic, and religious tensions. Still, while the temperance movement made less substantial inroads into lower-class workers’ heavy-drinking social culture, the movement was still a great success for the reformers. In the 1830s, Americans drank half of what they had in the 1820s, and per capita consumption continued to decline over the next two decades.
Though middle-class reformers worked tirelessly to cure all manner of social problems through institutional salvation and voluntary benevolent work, they regularly participated in religious organizations founded explicitly to address the spiritual mission at the core of evangelical Protestantism. In fact, for many reformers, it was actually the experience of evangelizing among the poor and seeing firsthand the rampant social issues plaguing life in the slums that first inspired them to get involved in benevolent reform projects. Modeling themselves on the British and Foreign Bible Society, formed in 1804 to spread Christian doctrine to the British working class, urban missionaries emphasized the importance of winning the world for Christ, one soul at a time. For example, the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society used the efficient new steam-powered printing press to distribute bibles and evangelizing religious tracts throughout the United States. For example, the New York Religious Tract Society alone managed to distribute religious tracts to all but 388 of New York City’s 28,383 families. In places like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, middle-class women also established groups specifically to canvass neighborhoods and bring the gospel to lower-class “wards.”

Such evangelical missions extended well beyond the urban landscape, however. Stirred by nationalism and moral purpose, evangelicals labored to make sure the word of God reached far-flung settlers on the new American frontier. The American Bible Society distributed thousands of Bibles to frontier areas where churches and clergy were scarce, while the American Home Missionary Society provided substantial financial assistance to frontier congregations struggling to achieve self-sufficiency. Missionaries worked to translate the Bible into Iroquois and other languages in order to more effectively evangelize Native American populations. As efficient printing technology and faster transportation facilitated new transatlantic and global connections, religious Americans also began to flex their missionary zeal on a global stage. In 1810, for example, Presbyterian and Congregationalist leaders established the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to evangelize in India, Africa, East Asia, and the Pacific.

The potent combination of social reform and evangelical mission at the heart of the nineteenth century’s benevolent empire produced reform agendas
and institutional changes that have reverberated through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By devoting their time to the moral uplift of their communities and the world at large, middle-class reformers created many of the largest and most influential organizations in the nation’s history. For the optimistic, religiously motivated American, no problem seemed too great to solve.

Difficulties could arise, however, when the benevolent empire attempted to take up more explicitly political issues. The movement against Indian removal was the first major example of this. Missionary work had first brought the Cherokee Nation to the attention of Northeastern evangelicals in the early nineteenth century. Missionaries sent by the American Board and other groups sought to introduce Christianity and American cultural values to the Cherokee, and celebrated when their efforts seemed to be met with success. Evangelicals proclaimed that the Cherokee were becoming “civilized,” which could be seen in their adoption of a written language and of a constitution modeled on the U.S. government. Mission supporters were shocked, then, when the election of Andrew Jackson brought a new emphasis on the removal of Native Americans from the land east of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was met with fierce opposition from within the affected Native American communities as well as from the benevolent empire. Jeremiah Evarts, one of the leaders of the American Board, wrote a series of essays under the pen name of William Penn urging Americans to oppose removal. He used the religious and moral arguments of the mission movement, but added a new layer of politics in his extensive discussion to the history of treaty law between the United States and Native Americans. This political shift was even more evident when American missionaries challenged Georgia state laws asserting sovereignty over Cherokee territory in the Supreme Court Case *Worcester v. Georgia*. Although successful in Court, the federal government did not enforce the Court’s decision and the opposition to Indian Removal was ultimately defeated with the Trail of Tears. It marked an important transition in the history of American religion and reform with this introduction of national politics.

Anti-removal activism was also notable for the entry of ordinary American women into political discourse. The first major petition campaign by American women focused on opposition to removal and was led (anonymously) by Catharine Beecher. Beecher was already a leader in the movement to reform women’s education and came to her role in removal through her connections to the mission movement. Inspired by a meeting with Jeremiah Evarts, Beecher echoed his arguments from the William Penn letters in her appeal to American women. Using religious and moral arguments to justify women’s entry into political discussion when it concerned an obviously moral cause, Beecher called on women to petition the government to end the policy of Indian removal. This effort was ultimately unsuccessful, but was significant
for its introduction of the kinds of arguments that would pave the way for women’s political activism for abolitionism and women’s rights. The divisions that the anti-removal campaign revealed would only become more dramatic with the next political cause of nineteenth century reformers: abolitionism.

V. AntiSlavery and Abolitionism

The revivalist doctrines of salvation, perfectionism, and disinterested benevolence led many evangelical reformers to believe that slavery was the most God-defying of all sins and the most terrible blight on the moral virtue of the United States. While white interest in and commitment to abolition had existed for several decades, organized antislavery advocacy had been largely restricted to models of gradual emancipation (seen in several northern states following the American Revolution) and conditional emancipation (seen in colonization efforts to remove black Americans to settlements in Africa). The colonizationist movement of the early nineteenth century had drawn together a broad political spectrum of Americans with its promise of gradually ending slavery in the United States by removing the free black population from North America. By the 1830s, however, a rising tide of anti-colonization sentiment among northern free blacks and middle-class evangelicals’ flourishing commitment to social reform radicalized the movement. Baptists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Congregational revivalists like Arthur and Lewis Tappan and Theodore Dwight Weld, and radical Quakers including Lucretia Mott and John Greenleaf Whittier helped push the idea of immediate emancipation onto the center stage of northern reform agendas. Inspired by a strategy known as “moral suasion,” these young abolitionists believed they could convince slaveholders to voluntarily release their slaves by appealing to their sense of Christian conscience. The result would be national redemption and moral harmony.

William Loyd Garrison’s early life and career famously illustrated this transition toward immediatism among radical Christian reformers. As a young man immersed in the reform culture of antebellum Massachusetts, Garrison had fought slavery in the 1820s by advocating for both black colonization and gradual abolition. Fiery tracts penned by black northerners David Walker and James Forten, however, convinced Garrison that colonization was an inherently racist project and that African Americans possessed a hard-won right to the fruits of American liberty. So, in 1831, he established a newspaper called The Liberator, through which he organized and spearheaded an unprecedented interracial crusade dedicated to promoting immediate emancipation and black citizenship. Then, in 1833, Garrison presided as reformers from ten states came together to create the American Antislavery Society. They rested their mission for immediate emancipation “upon the Declaration of our Independence, and upon the truths of Divine Revelation,” binding their cause to both national and Christian redemption. Abolitionists fought to save slaves and their nation’s soul.
In order to accomplish their goals, abolitionists employed every method of outreach and agitation used in the social reform projects of the benevolent empire. At home in the North, abolitionists established hundreds of antislavery societies and worked with long-standing associations of black activists to establish schools, churches, and voluntary associations. Women and men of all colors were encouraged to associate together in these spaces to combat what they termed “color phobia.” Harnessing the potential of steam-powered printing and mass communication, abolitionists also blanketed the free states with pamphlets and antislavery newspapers. They blared their arguments from lyceum podiums and broadsides. Prominent individuals such as Wendell Phillips and Angelina Grimké saturated northern media with shame-inducing exposés of northern complicity in the return of fugitive slaves, and white reformers sentimentalized slave narratives that tugged at middle-class heartstrings. Abolitionists used the United States Postal Service in 1835 to inundate southern slaveholders’ with calls to emancipate their slaves in order to save their souls, and, in 1836, they prepared thousands of petitions for Congress as part of the “Great Petition Campaign.” In the six years from 1831 to 1837, abolitionist activities reached dizzying heights.

However, such efforts encountered fierce opposition, as most Americans did not share abolitionists’ particular brand of nationalism. In fact, abolitionists remained a small, marginalized group detested by most white Americans in both the North and the South. Immediatists were attacked as the harbingers of disunion, rabble-rousers who would stir up sectional tensions and thereby imperil the American experiment of self-government. Particularly troubling to some observers was the public engagement of women as abolitionist speakers and activists. Fearful of disunion and outraged by the interracial nature of abolitionism, northern mobs smashed abolitionist printing presses and even killed a prominent antislavery newspaper editor named Elijah Lovejoy. White southerners, believing that abolitionists had incited Nat Turner’s rebellion in 1831, aggressively purged antislavery dissent from the region. Violent harassment threatened abolitionists’ personal safety. In Congress, Whigs and Democrats joined forces in 1836 to pass an unprecedented restriction on freedom of political expression known as the “gag rule,” prohibiting all discussion of abolitionist petitions in the House of Representatives. Two years later, mobs attacked the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, throwing rocks through the windows and burning the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall to the ground.

In the face of such substantial external opposition, the abolitionist movement began to splinter. In 1839, an ideological schism shook the foundations of organized antislavery. Moral suasionists, led most prominently by William Lloyd Garrison, felt that the United States Constitution was a fundamentally pro-slavery document, and that the present political
system was irredeemable. They dedicated their efforts exclusively towards persuading the public to redeem the nation by re-establishing it on antislavery grounds. However, many abolitionists, reeling from the level of entrenched opposition met in the 1830s, began to feel that moral suasion was no longer realistic. Instead, they believed, abolition would have to be effected through existing political processes. So, in 1839, political abolitionists formed the Liberty Party under the leadership of James G. Birney. This new abolitionist society was predicated on the belief that the U.S. Constitution was actually an antislavery document that could be used to abolish the stain of slavery through the national political system.

Women’s rights, too, divided abolitionists. Many abolitionists who believed full-heartedly in moral suasion nonetheless felt compelled to leave the American Antislavery Association because, in part, it elevated women to leadership positions and endorsed women’s suffrage. This question came to a head when, in 1840, Abby Kelly was elected to the business committee of the American Antislavery Society. The elevation of women to full leadership roles was too much for some conservative members who saw this as evidence that, in an effort to achieve general perfectionism, the American Antislavery Society had lost sight of its most important goal. Under the leadership of Arthur Tappan, they left to form the American and Foreign Antislavery Society. Though these disputes were ultimately mere road bumps on the long path to abolition, they did become so bitter and acrimonious that former friends cut social ties and traded public insults.

Another significant shift stemmed from the disappointments of the 1830s. Abolitionists in the 1840s increasingly moved from agendas based on reform to agendas based on resistance. While moral suasionists continued to appeal to hearts and minds, and political abolitionists launched sustained campaigns to bring abolitionist agendas to the
ballot box, the entrenched and violent opposition of slaveholders and the northern public to their reform efforts encouraged abolitionists to focus on other avenues of fighting the slave power. Increasingly, for example, abolitionists focused on helping and protecting runaway slaves, and on establishing international antislavery support networks to help put pressure on the United States to abolish the institution. Frederick Douglass is one prominent example of how these two trends came together. After escaping from slavery, Douglass came to the fore of the abolitionist movement as a naturally gifted orator and a powerful narrator of his experiences in slavery. His first autobiography, published in 1845, was so widely read that it was reprinted in nine editions and translated into several languages. Douglass traveled to Great Britain in 1845, and met with famous British abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson, drumming up moral and financial support from British and Irish antislavery societies. He was neither the first nor the last runaway slave to make this voyage, but his great success abroad contributed significantly to rousing morale among weary abolitionists at home.

The model of resistance to the slave power only became more pronounced after 1850, when a long-standing Fugitive Slave Act was given new teeth. Though a legal mandate to return runaway slaves had existed in U.S. federal law since 1793, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 upped the ante by harshly penalizing officials who failed to arrest runaways and private citizens who tried to help them. This law, coupled with growing concern over the possibility of that slavery would be allowed in Kansas when it was admitted as a state, made the 1850s a highly volatile and violent period of American antislavery. Reform took a backseat as armed mobs protected runaway slaves in the north and fortified abolitionists engaged in bloody skirmishes in the west. Culminating in John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, the violence of the 1850s convinced many Americans that the issue of slavery was pushing the nation to the brink of sectional cataclysm. After two decades of immediatist agitation, the idealism of revivalist perfectionism had given way to a protracted battle for the moral soul of the country.

For all of the problems that abolitionism faced, the movement was far from a failure. The prominence of African Americans in abolitionist organizations offered a powerful, if imperfect, model of interracial coexistence. While immediatists always remained a minority, their efforts paved the way for the moderately antislavery Republican Party to gain traction in the years preceding the Civil War. It is hard to imagine that Abraham Lincoln could have become president in 1860 without the ground prepared by antislavery advocates and without the presence of radical abolitionists against whom he could be cast as a moderate alternative. Though it ultimately took a civil war to break the bonds of slavery in the United States, the evangelical moral compass of revivalist Protestantism provided motivation for the embattled abolitionists.
VI. Women’s Rights in Antebellum America

In the era of revivalism and reform, Americans understood the family and home as the hearthstones of civic virtue and moral influence. This increasingly confined middle-class white women to the domestic sphere, where they were responsible for educating children and maintaining household virtue. Yet women took the very ideology that defined their place in the home and managed to use it to fashion a public role for themselves. As a result, women actually became more visible and active in the public sphere than ever before. The influence of the Second Great Awakening, coupled with new educational opportunities available to girls and young women, enabled white middle-class women to leave their homes en masse, joining and forming societies dedicated to everything from literary interests to the antislavery movement.

Female education provides an example of the great strides made by and for women during the antebellum period. As part of a larger education reform movement in the early republic, several female reformers worked tirelessly to increase women’s access to education. They argued that if women were to take charge of the education of their children, they needed to be well educated themselves. While the women’s education movement did not generally push for women’s political or social equality, it did assert women’s intellectual equality with men, an idea that would eventually have important effects. Educators such as Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Mary Lyons (founders of the Troy Female Seminary, Hartford Female Seminary, and Mount Holyoke Seminary, respectively) adopted the same rigorous curriculum as that used for boys. Many of these schools had the particular goal of training women to be teachers. Many graduates of these prominent
seminaries would go on to found their own schools, spreading a more academic women’s education across the country and with it, ideas about women’s potential to take part in public life.

The abolitionist movement was another important school for women’s public engagement. Many of the earliest women’s rights advocates began their activism by fighting the injustices of slavery, including Angelina Grimké, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In the 1830s, women in cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia established female societies dedicated to the antislavery mission. Initially, these societies were similar to the prayer and fundraising-based projects of other reform societies. As such societies proliferated, however, their strategies changed. Women could not vote, for example, but they increasingly used their right to petition to express their antislavery grievances to the government. Impassioned women like the Grimké sisters even began to travel on lecture circuits dedicated to the cause. This latter strategy, born out of fervent antislavery advocacy, ultimately tethered the cause of women’s rights to that of abolitionism.

Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké were born to a wealthy family in Charleston, South Carolina, where they witnessed firsthand the horrors of slavery. Repulsed by the treatment of the slaves on the Grimké plantation, they decided to support the antislavery movement by sharing their experiences on Northern lecture tours. At first speaking to female audiences, they soon attracted “promiscuous” crowds of both men and women. They were among the earliest and most famous American women to take such a public role in the name of reform. When the Grimké sisters met substantial harassment and opposition to their public speaking on antislavery, they were inspired to speak out against more than the slave system. They began to see that they would need to fight for women’s rights simply in order to be able to fight for the rights of slaves. Other female abolitionists soon joined them in linking the issues of women’s rights and abolitionism by drawing direct
comparisons between the condition of free women in the United States and the condition of the slave.

As the antislavery movement gained momentum in the northern states in the 1830s and 1840s, so too did efforts for women’s rights. These efforts came to a head at an event that took place in London in 1840. That year, Lucretia Mott was among the American delegates attending the World Antislavery Convention in London. However, due to ideological disagreements between some of the abolitionists, the convention’s organizers refused to seat the female delegates or allow them to vote during the proceedings. Angered by this treatment, Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose husband was also a delegate, returned to the United States with a renewed interest in pursuing women’s rights. In 1848, they organized the Seneca Falls Convention, a two-day summit in New York state in which women’s rights advocates came together to discuss the problems facing women.

Stanton wrote the Declaration of Sentiments for the Seneca Falls Convention in the hopes that it would encapsulate the wide range of issues that the early woman’s rights movement embraced. Modeled on the Declaration of Independence in order to emphasize the belief that women’s rights were part of the same democratic promises on which the United States was founded, it outlined fifteen grievances and eleven resolutions designed to promote women’s access to civil rights. Among these were issues including married women’s right to property, access to the professions, and, most controversially, the right to vote. Sixty-eight women and thirty-two men, all of who were already involved in some aspect of reform, signed the Declaration of Sentiments.

Above all else, antebellum women’s rights advocates sought civil equality for men and women. They fought what they perceived as senseless gender discrimination, such as barring women from attending college or paying female teachers less than their male colleagues, and they argued that men and women should be held to the same moral standards. The Seneca Falls Convention was the first of many similar gatherings promoting women’s rights across the northern states. Yet the women’s rights movement grew slowly, and experienced few victories: few states reformed married women’s property laws before the Civil War, and no state was prepared to offer women the right to vote during the antebellum period. At the onset of the Civil War, women’s rights advocates temporarily threw all of their support behind abolition, allowing the cause of racial equality to temporarily trump that of gender equality. But the words of the Seneca Falls convention continued to inspire activists for generations.

VII. Conclusion

By the time civil war erupted in 1861, the revival and reform movements of the antebellum period had made an indelible mark on the American landscape. The
Second Great Awakening ignited Protestant spirits by connecting evangelical Christians in national networks of faith. The social reform encouraged within such networks spurred members of the middle class to promote national morality and the public good. Not all reform projects were equally successful, however. While the temperance movement made substantial inroads against the excesses of alcohol consumption, the abolitionist movement proved so divisive that it paved the way for sectional crisis. Yet participation in reform movements, regardless of their ultimate success, encouraged many Americans to see themselves in new ways. Black activists became a powerful voice in antislavery societies, for example, developing domestic and transnational connections through which to pursue the cause of liberty. Middle-class women’s dominant presence in the benevolent empire encouraged them to pursue a full-fledged women’s right movement that has lasted in various forms up through the present day. In their efforts to make the United States a more virtuous and moral nation, nineteenth-century reform activists developed cultural and institutional foundations for social change that have continued to reverberate through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Content provided by The American Yawp
**UNIT 9**
**TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Samuel Slater opened his first mill in Rhode Island.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>Invention of the cotton gin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Eli Whitney used “interchangeable parts” to produce 10,000 rifles for the US government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>British manufactured goods are excluded from import to the US by the Embargo Act. Robert Fulton’s <em>Clermont</em> popularized steamboats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812 - 1815</td>
<td>War of 1812 cut off British manufactured goods competition within the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>First leg of construction on the National Road completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Lowell, Massachusetts founded as a mill town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820s</td>
<td>Shaker colonies grew in popularity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Francis Cabot Lowell, who’d visited British textile mills earlier in the century, raised money and opened his first cotton textile factory in Massachusetts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Women led one of the country’s earliest textile mill strikes, in Rhode Island.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Erie Canal opened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (American Temperance Society) founded. The steam-powered printing press was used for the first time in US. Schuylkill Canal completed in Pennsylvania.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>In Massachusetts, the public school movement began. Freedom’s Journal began publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td><em>Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World</em> published by David Walker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>The anti-slavery newspaper the <em>Liberator</em>, by William Lloyd Garrison, started publication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT 9

TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Immigration from Europe started to increase, particularly to the northern part of the US. New England Anti-Slavery Society founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>The &quot;gag rule&quot; was passed by Congress to prevent anti-slavery discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1830s</td>
<td>The Grimke sisters, Angelina and Sarah become famous abolitionists and women's rights advocates. Sarah in 1837 published <em>Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>The Panic of 1837 started a seven-year depression, impacting northern laborers. John Deere invented the steel-tipped plow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Theodore Weld published <em>American Slavery As It Is</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840s</td>
<td>Mechanical reapers developed. New York and Boston instituted public water works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>The anti-slavery Liberty Party was founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td><em>Treatise on Domestic Economy</em> published by Catharine Beecher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>The Millerites waited for the end of the world as they knew it, and when it didn't come, they didn't feel fine. Dorothea Dix led asylum reform in the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Joseph Smith, Mormon leader, killed. Samuel Morse's first telegraph operated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>New England Female Labor Reform Association organized. Potato blight in Ireland led to Irish immigration to US. New York City established a police force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Mormons settled around the Great Salt Lake in Utah (part of Mexico).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Oneida community of New York organized. Seneca Falls Convention met in New York State, launching the suffrage movement for women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Congress granted lands to railroad companies to promote western settlement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### UNIT 9
#### TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Massachusetts integrated public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>California connected to other states by telegraph.</td>
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UNIT 10
THE 1850s

The Compromise of 1850

Background: At the end of Polk’s administration, entering into Taylor’s, there were major issues facing the nation which politicians wanted to resolve.

- California wanted to enter the Union as a free state. Gold had been found in the Sacramento River Valley in 1848. The population of the area went from 10,000 to 100,000 within about a year.

- The question of slavery in the territories acquired from the war with Mexico remained unresolved.

- There was a border dispute between Texas and New Mexico over the boundary between them. The Texas militia intended to march on Santa Fe to take its territorial claims.

- There was a growing demand for an end to slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. The congressional Gag Rule had prevented or put time limits on the discussion of the issue.

- There was a growing demand in the South for a stronger Fugitive Slave Law. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 required that all citizens help to assist in the capture of runaway slaves. The South complained that the law was weak and usually ignored in the North. With approximately, 1,000 runaways per year and an active underground railroad network run by individuals like Harriet Tubman, the South’s outcry on this issue was loud.

Taylor’s Administration and Congressional Quarrels:

A scheme by Taylor to get California into the Union (free state) upset Southerners, thus southern Whigs and Democrats in Congress opposed Tyler. In fact, a group of these politicians met in Jackson, Mississippi to discuss the possibility of meeting again in June of 1850 in Nashville, Tennessee to consider secession. Such meetings did not accomplish anything, but they were a clear sign of the times to come. The first session of the 31st Congress met in December 1849. The House was divided evenly between Whigs and Democrats, with Free Soilers holding the balance. The House was deadlocked and ineffective. The Senate was where politics happened. It also was the meeting place for two generations of politicians. The “old guard” was replaced by men of similar thinking and agendas. This newer generation held more sectionalized views than its predecessors. For example: Old Henry Clay who favored compromises to sectional controversies served with by Stephen Douglas. Old John Calhoun who was the voice of southern States Rights Democrats served with Jefferson Davis. And, old Daniel Webster who was a Free Soil/abolitionist northerner served with William Seward. The younger men carried the ideological views of the older generation into the 1850s.
The Compromise of 1850:
These men were the politicians who negotiated the Compromise of 1850. Clay and Douglas introduced a series of bills designed to “solve” the nation’s problems. Men like them were worried about the Union’s survival and tried to stop secessionist trends. They introduced five bills, which after much intense and hostile debate, passed individually by Congress and together made up the Compromise of 1850.

1. California was admitted as a free state, despite it upsetting the sectional balance in Congress.
2. Two new territories were organized out of the New Mexico territory: the Utah and New Mexico territories. In these areas popular sovereignty was to decide if slave labor would be allowed.
3. Texas dropped its claim on the New Mexico territory in exchange for the U.S. government agreeing to pay off the state’s debt.
4. The slave TRADE was abolished in Washington D.C., but slavery was still allowed.
5. A new and stronger Fugitive Slave Act was passed.

Some of the men in Congress supported the compromise hoping that it would solve the difficulties between the sections and end the threat of secession. However, many men with deep abolitionist or pro-slavery convictions were not satisfied with the agreement. In general, though, the nation accepted the compromise. The South accept it on the condition that the Fugitive Slave Act be enforced; the North accepted it as long as the Fugitive Slave Act could be ignored. South Carolina did not reject or embrace it, but Georgia (via its Georgia Platform) demanded that if the Fugitive Slave Act were not enforced, it would consider secession from the Union.

The Election of 1852
The Election of 1852 was filled with mudslinging. The Democrats ran Franklin Pierce (NH). The Whigs ran General Winfield Scott. The Free Soil party was very weak. Pierce won the election. See your textbook for more information.

1850s Expansionism
In particular the South wanted to obtain more land for slavery. Southerners were interested in Cuba, and with this, Southerners proposed the Ostend Manifesto (1854), calling for the purchase of Cuba from Spain for $120 million. The manifesto also threatened Spain with a forceful take-over of Cuba, if the Spanish did not agree to the purchase. The manifesto never was utilized due to the controversies surrounding it.
The Kansas-Nebraska Act
(1854)

Background:
Congress did not organize the area north of 36 degrees 30 minutes in the Louisiana Purchase territory, because the North and South could not decide on the status of slave versus free labor in the territories. Many people in Missouri and the South wanted the land and for slave labor to expand immediately west of Missouri. Northerners also were interested in the territory, because many wanted it to be organized so that a transcontinental railroad could run to far West. Stephen Douglas from Chicago, Illinois was one such person. Trying to please his constituents, who favored a transcontinental railroad for regional, economic gains, Douglas devised the Kansas-Nebraska Act, in order to organize the territory. The South, though, had to be compromised with if Douglas were to get the bill passed. Therefore, he wrote into the legislation pro-southern items. The bill pleased President Pierce, and so after passing Congress, the Kansas-Nebraska Act went into effect. The act in its final form had these main point:

• Two territories would be organized out of the Louisiana Purchase territory: the Kansas Territory and the Nebraska Territory.

• In both territories, popular sovereignty would decide if slave labor would be allowed.

• However, it was assumed that Nebraska Territory would be only free labor and Kansas Territory would be open to slave labor.

Consequences of the Act:
• Bleeding Kansas - Both Free Soilers and Southerners entered the Kansas Territory in order to settle it. As per popular sovereignty, these settlers hoped to see the territory become either free or slave, according to their desires. Once the appropriate population numbers were reached, the territorial governor (appointed by Congress) called for the election of a territorial legislature. On election day, “Border Ruffians,” as they were nicknamed, from Missouri crossed into the Kansas Territory and voted in the election. The result was the election of a pro-slavery, territorial legislature. Free Soilers wanted the election thrown out by Congress, but deciding to act on their own, they formed another -free soil-legislature. Thus, the territory of Kansas had two legislatures. The pro-slavery body started to write a state constitution, legalizing slavery in Kansas, which eventually was submitted to Congress, as per the statehood process. These political tensions resulted in bloodshed, when a pro-slavery group of settlers attacked and killed residents of the free soil town of Lawrence. In response, abolitionist John Brown and his followers sought revenge by attacking a pro-slavery settlement at Pottawatomie Creek. Brown, being a radical, decapitated
and mutilated the pro-slavery settler’s bodies. Eventually, due to the violence in Kansas, President Pierce sent in troops to restore order. But, the tensions in Kansas continued through the era and early in the Civil War.

- “The Crime Against Kansas” was a speech delivered by abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner in May of 1856. In his speech, Sumner defended the northern position on the Kansas situation and attacked the institution of slavery, the South, South Carolina, and Senator Butler (S.C.). Representative Preston Brooks, Butler’s nephew, took personal insult from Sumner’s remarks. In retaliation, using a mahogany cane, he clubbed Sumner from behind, while the elderly senator was seated at his desk in the Senate chamber. Brooks beat Sumner so badly that he almost died and needed two years of recovery. The Senate held his position, while the House censured Brooks, who resigned his position and paid a fine. Sumner became a martyr for the abolitionist/free soil cause, while Brooks became a hero to the South. Southerners, in fact, sent Brooks hundreds of canes to honor his action, often with notes attached calling for more of the same kind of treatment to other abolitionists.

- The election of 1856 was tainted by all of the political fury over Kansas and the extension of slavery into the territories. The Democrats ran James Buchanan (PA), who had a reputation for being pro-southern, on a platform that endorsed the Kansas-Nebraska Act and popular sovereignty. The Republicans ran John C. Fremont (Calif.). The Republican party formed at the state level after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Men like, William Seward were party leaders. It was a northern party that drew support from old-Whigs, Free Soilers, and abolitionists. On a whole, the party opposed the extension of slave labor into the territories, but did not take issue with slavery where it already existed. Their platform also favored internal improvements. In 1856, the Republicans were not well-organized at the national level, and thus they did not win the presidency. It was a close race, but the Democrats won the White House and Congress.

James Buchanan’s Administration and the Breakup of the Union

It was under Buchanan’s administration that the Union broke up. By that time, the forces of sectionalism no longer could be contained through compromises such as the Missouri Compromise or Compromise of 1850. The events that occurred in Buchanan’s administration were the last stage of events that sectionalized the nation into Civil War.
UNIT 10
THE 1850s

- The Panic of 1857 hit, and the North was in economic distress. Buchanan refused to raise the tariff to protect the North’s economy, in part due to his pro-southern bias. Northerners blamed Buchanan and the South for the economic difficulties.

- The Dred Scott Decision. With 7 out of the 9 Supreme Court justices being Democrats, and 5 of the 9 being slave owners, the outcome of this case was pro-southern and in effect declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional. From the research & readings, be able to answer these questions: What were the details of the case? What did the decision say regarding the status of Dred Scott and all African-Americans? In effect, what did the ruling allow Southerners to do with their slaves (in terms of moving throughout the nation)? Why were Northerners upset with the ruling?

- The difficulties in Kansas continued. In June of 1857 the Kansas legislature called an election for the adoption of the Lecompton Constitution. As in prior elections, fraud was involve. The constitution was adopted and sent to Congress in application for statehood. However, a growing number of people in Kansas embraced the Free Soil agenda and challenged the legitimacy of the Lecompton Constitution. Heated debates broke out in Congress regarding the Lecompton Constitution as well as other events in Kansas. On a whole, Southerners felt Kansas’ constitution should be adopted, while Northerners rejected it. The debates, violence, and struggles over Kansas continued, and it remained a territory until 1861 when Kansas finally entered the Union as a free state.

- The Lincoln-Douglas debates highlighted many of the sectional and constitutional arguments of the era, while making Abraham Lincoln a household name. From the research & readings, understand the main arguments both men used and the political effects of the debates.

- John Brown’s raid on the arsenal Harper’s Ferry, Virginia in October of 1859 convinced the South of what they suspected all along: that Northerners (especially abolitionists) wanted to create a massive, slave rebellion in the South to overthrow the southern way of life. He was captured and convicted of treason in Virginia. On December 2, 1859 he was executed. The northern outcry over the legalities of the execution was loud. John Brown’s last words were: “Now, if it is deemed necessary, that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done.”
  - Words of John Brown, public domain document.
UNIT 10
THE 1850s

The Election of 1860

The Election of 1860 was the final tear in the social fabric of the nation that resulted in South’s decision to leave the Union. The Democrats were a party divided by the forces of sectionalism. The Republicans were a sectionalized party, existing only in the North. A third party, the Constitutional Union Party, hoped to stave off Civil War via compromise.

- The Democrats were divided. The extreme pro-southern (states rights) men were determined to have their views on the Constitution and slavery prevail. Stephen Douglas and other northern Democrats wanted a neutral platform. Southern delegates to the Democratic national convention in South Carolina walked out when Douglas’ men did not yield to their demands. The Democrats decided to meet again in Baltimore, but the same split occurred. Ultimately, southerners met separately to nominate John Breckenridge as their pro-slavery candidate, while Northerners nominated popular sovereignty-supporting Stephen Douglas for president.

- The Republicans were divided between those supporting Abraham Lincoln and those favoring William Seward for the nomination. Ultimately, Lincoln received the nomination because Seward was considered too radical of an abolitionist. To mollify an angry Seward, Lincoln gave him the prestigious cabinet position of Secretary of State. The Republican platform called for no further slavery in the territories and appealed to the economic needs of the North (e.g. protective tariffs, railroad development, free farm land)

- The Constitutional Union party was comprised of men who wanted to patch up the sectional differences, as had been done in the 1840s and 50s. They refused to commit to a position on slavery in the territories. Their platform vaguely stressed the supremacy of the “Constitution, Union, and Laws,” but offered no solution for the problems facing the nation. Hoping to create a deadlock in the election in order to throw it into the House of Representatives, where their compromise-oriented candidate would have a better chance of winning, this party nominated John Bell.

Election Parameters and Results:

The election really was comprised of two races. In the North Lincoln and Douglas faced-off, while in the South, Bell and Breckenridge competed. The results of the election reflected the sectionalized nature of politics at the time. Lincoln carried every free state except for New Jersey. Douglas took Missouri and New Jersey. Breckenridge took the lower South and Maryland, while Bell took Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. Apart from the South’s obvious disgruntlement with Lincoln’s victory was the fact that Douglas won second place in the popular vote (Lincoln won first place). Since a majority in the North voted for either Lincoln or Douglas (northern candidates) the
South argued that the North was not interested in protecting their natural rights (especially to slaves as property), cultural way of life, or livelihood. Southerners felt justified in leaving the Union, and South Carolina started the process.

Secession

The South left the Union during Buchanan’s administration. South Carolina was the first state to leave the Union, by means of a state convention, in December of 1860. During the next six weeks other states followed. By February 1861, seven of the seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama to form the Confederate States of America, write a constitution, and elect Jefferson Davis as their president. Buchanan decided not to respond. Like other northern Democrats, he argued that these states did not have the legal right to leave the Union, but he also believed that the federal government was powerless to stop them.

James H. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a compromise to Congress. The “Crittenden Compromise” wanted to restore the Missouri Compromise, protect slavery in the South, allow the interstate slave trade, and give compensation for fugitive slaves. Northerners and Southerners dismissed the proposals. Republicans argued that they could not compromise on the issue of slavery in the territories, and the Southerners determined that staying in the Union was the equivalent of submitting to a hostile northern majority. The sectional dynamics that drove the nation apart had gone too far for compromise solutions (like those of prior generations) to work. For a time, various opinions emerged regarding how to handle the South’s secession. Some abolitionist northerners, for example, were happy to see the slave-holding South leave. Others hoped for an eventual peaceful reunion, while many anticipated the worst: Civil War. Neither side believed that if a war broke out that it would last long.

Inaugurated in March of 1861, Lincoln wanted to preserve the Union, and it was his intention to hold onto federal territories in the South. Federal forts located within the C.S.A. were of particular interest, especially Fort Sumter (S.C.) and Fort Pickens (LA). Lincoln wanted to keep both forts. Lincoln also wanted the South to be the first to instigate any armed conflict. Due to circumstances related to a Federal attempt to resupply troops stationed at Fort Sumter, South Carolina chose to fire upon the fort on April 12, 1861. On April 15, Lincoln called for troops, and the war commenced. The North initially rallied around the cause to defeat the Confederacy and to restore the Union. With the firing upon Fort Sumter, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina joined the Union. Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri did not secede. The western part of Virginia chose to remain loyal to the Union and separated from Virginia to form its own state - West Virginia. Lincoln recognized that it was important to keep the border states loyal, as the potential man-power within them (that did not go to the South) weakened the Confederacy. And, man-power was needed in great numbers on both sides, especial-
ly as the war dragged on. Ultimately, both the North and South relied upon enlistments and conscription to fight the war, which lasted much longer than either side anticipated.

In the end with the North’s victory, Hamiltonianism and the northern vision for an industrial-commercial America won. Because of this victory, the nation rebuilt around the strong central government interpretation of the social contract of the Constitution. The Emancipation Proclamation, which only ended slavery in the Confederacy upon northern troops conquering southern lands, freed the slaves, as a strategic war maneuver (by cutting off the South’s key labor force, their wartime economy and ability to trade would be weakened). It was not until the 13th Amendment to the Constitution that slavery became illegal everywhere in the Union.

But, during Reconstruction, many former slaves (Freedmen) returned to southern plantations under the sharecropping system, which, in combination with oppressive racial laws (Jim Crow laws) and segregation, created for southern whites the next best thing to the captive, cheap labor force that they had in slavery before the war. And, both Northerners and Southerners were content with that fact. Northerners were particularly pleased that the threat of economic competition from slave labor was gone from both the territories and in their own home states, post Dred Scott decision. And, even though the Civil War for African-Americans was about ending slavery and oppression, blacks were legally and socially relegated to the lowest ranks in American society through the 20th century.

On the national front, because of the North’s victory, the U.S. in the late 19th century advanced agriculturally, industrially, politically, and culturally in such ways as to launch itself onto the world scene in the 20th century first as a major world power and then later as a superpower. The modern global economy and American standard of living in the 20th century are outgrowths of the Hamiltonian (N) victory over Jeffersonianism (S). So, as you see, what we -as individuals- chose to believe/do and not to believe/do matters now ... and for countless generations to come.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
I. Introduction

Conflicts stemming from slavery’s western expansion created problems for the United States from the very start. Battles emerged over the westward expansion of slavery and over the role of the federal government in protecting the interests of slaveholders. Northern workers felt that slavery suppressed wages and stole land that could have been used by poor white Americans to achieve economic independence. Southerners feared that without slavery’s expansion, the abolitionist faction would come to dominate national politics and an increasingly dense population of slaves would lead to bloody insurrection and race war. Constant resistance from enslaved men and women required a strong proslavery government to maintain order. As the North gradually abolished human bondage, enslaved men and women headed North on an underground railroad of hideaways and safe houses. Northerners and Southerners came to disagree sharply on the role of the federal government in capturing and returning these freedom seekers. While Northerners appealed to their states’ rights to refuse capturing runaway slaves, Southerners demanded a national commitment to slavery. Enslaved laborers meanwhile remained vitally important to the nation’s economy, fueling not only the southern plantation economy but also providing raw materials for the industrial North. Differences over the fate of slavery remained at the heart of American politics, especially as the United
States expanded. After decades of conflict, Americans north and south began to fear that the opposite section of the country had seized control of the government. By November 1860, an opponent of slavery’s expansion arose from within the Republican Party. During the secession crisis that followed in 1860-1861, fears, nearly a century in the making, at last devolved into bloody war.

II. Sectionalism in the Early Republic

Slavery’s history stretched back to antiquity. Prior to the American Revolution, nearly everyone in the world accepted it as a natural part of life. English colonies north and south relied on enslaved workers who grew tobacco, harvested indigo and sugar, and worked in ports. They generated tremendous wealth for the British crown. That wealth and luxury fostered seemingly limitless opportunities, and inspired seemingly boundless imaginations. Enslaved workers also helped give rise to revolutionary new ideals, ideals that in time became the ideological foundations of the sectional crisis. English political theorists, in particular, began to re-think natural law justifications for slavery. They rejected the longstanding idea that slavery was a condition that naturally suited some people. A new transatlantic antislavery movement began to argue that freedom was the natural condition of man was freedom.

Revolutionaries seized onto these ideas to stunning effect in the late eighteenth century. In the United States, France, and Haiti, revolutionaries began the work of splintering the old order. Each revolution seemed to radicalize the next. Bolder and more expansive declarations of equality and freedom followed one after the other. Revolutionaries in the United States declared, “All men are created equal,” in the 1770s. French visionaries issued the “Declaration of Rights and Man and Citizen” by 1789. But the most startling development came in 1803. A revolution led by the island’s rebellious slaves turned France’s most valuable sugar colony into an independent country administered by the formerly enslaved.
The Haitian Revolution marked an early origin of the sectional crisis. It helped splinter the Atlantic basin into clear zones of freedom and un-freedom, while in the process shattering the longstanding assumption that African slaves could not also be rulers. Despite the clear limitations of the American Revolution in attacking slavery, the era marked a powerful break in slavery’s history. Military service on behalf of both the English and the American army freed thousands of slaves. Many others simply used the turmoil of war to make their escape. As a result, free black communities emerged—communities that would continually reignite the antislavery struggle. For nearly a century, most white Americans were content to compromise over the issue of slavery, but the constant agitation of black Americans, both enslaved and free, kept the issue alive.

The national breakdown over slavery occurred over a long timeline and across a broad geography. Debates over slavery in the American West proved especially important. As the United States pressed westward in its search for new land and resources after its victory in the Revolution, new questions arose as to whether those lands ought to be slave or free. The framers of the Constitution did a little, but not much, to help resolve these early questions. Article VI of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance banned slavery north and west of the Ohio River. Many whites took it to mean that the founders intended for slavery to die out, as why else would they prohibit its spread across such a huge swath of territory?

Debates over the framer’s intentions often led to confusion and bitter debate, but the actions of the new government left better clues as to what the new nation intended for slavery. Congress authorized the admission of Vermont (1791) and Kentucky (1792), with Vermont coming into the Union as a free state, and Kentucky coming in as a slave state. Though Americans at the time made relatively little of the balancing act suggested by the admission of a slave state and a free state, the pattern became increasingly important. By 1820, preserving the balance of free states and slave states would be seen as an issue of national security.

New pressures challenging the delicate balance again arose in the West. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 more than doubled the size of the United States. Questions immediately arose as to whether these lands would be made slave or free. Complicating matters further was the rapid expansion of plantation slavery fueled by the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Yet even with the booming cotton economy, many Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that slavery was a temporary institution and would soon die out. The Louisiana Purchase signaled the beginning of rising sectional feelings, but a truly sectional national debate did not yet emerge.

That debate, however, came quickly. Sectional differences tied to the expansion of plantation slavery in the West were especially important after 1803. The
Ohio Valley became an early fault line in the coming sectional struggle. Kentucky and Tennessee emerged as slave states, while free states Ohio, Indiana (1816) and Illinois (1818) gained admission along the river’s northern banks. Borderland negotiations and accommodations along the Ohio River fostered a distinctive kind of white supremacy, as laws tried to keep blacks out of the West entirely. Ohio’s so-called “Black Laws,” of 1803 foreshadowed the exclusionary cultures of Indiana, Illinois, and several subsequent states of the Old Northwest and later, the Far West. These laws often banned African American voting, denied black Americans access to public schools, and made it impossible for non-whites to serve on juries and in local militias, among a host of other restrictions and obstacles.

The Missouri Territory, by far the largest section of the Louisiana Territory, marked a turning point in the sectional crisis. Saint Louis, a bustling Mississippi River town filled with powerful slave owners, loomed large as an important trade headquarters for networks in the northern Mississippi Valley and the Greater West. In 1817, eager to put questions of whether this territory would be slave or free to rest, Congress opened its debate over Missouri’s admission to the Union. Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed laws that would gradually abolish slavery in the new state. Southern states responded with unanimous outrage, and the nation shuddered at an undeniable sectional controversy.

Congress reached a “compromise” on Missouri’s admission, largely through the work of Kentuckian Henry Clay. Maine would be admitted to the Union as a free state. In exchange, Missouri would come into the Union as a slave state. Legislators sought to prevent future conflicts by making Missouri’s southern border at 36° 30’ the new dividing line between slavery and freedom in the Louisiana Purchase lands. South of that line, running east from Missouri to the western edge of the Louisiana Purchase lands (near the present-day Texas panhandle) slavery could expand. North of it, encompassing what in 1820 was still “unorganized territory,” there would be no slavery.

The Missouri Compromise marked a major turning point in America’s sectional crisis because it exposed to the public just how divisive the slavery issue had grown. The debate filled newspapers, speeches, and Congressional records. Antislavery and pro-slavery positions from that point forward repeatedly returned to points made during the Missouri debates. Legislators battled for weeks over whether the Constitutional framers intended slavery’s expansion or not, and these contests left deep scars. Even seemingly simple and straightforward phrases like “All Men Are Created Equal” were hotly contested all over again. Questions over the expansion of slavery remained open, but nearly all Americans concluded that the Constitution protected slavery where it already existed.
Southerners were not yet advancing arguments that said slavery was a positive good, but they did insist during the Missouri Debate that the framers supported slavery and wanted to see it expand. In Article 1, Section 2, for example, the Constitution enabled representation in the South to be based on rules defining enslaved people as 3/5 of a voter, meaning southern white men would be overrepresented in Congress. The Constitution also stipulated that Congress could not interfere with the slave trade before 1808, and enabled Congress to draft fugitive slave laws.

Antislavery participants in the Missouri debate argued that the framers never intended slavery to survive the Revolution and in fact hoped it would disappear through peaceful means. The framers of the Constitution never used the word “slave.” Slaves were referred to as “persons held in service,” perhaps referring to English common law precedents that questioned the legitimacy of “property in man.” Antislavery arguers also pointed out that while the Congress could not pass a law limiting the slave trade by 1808, the framers had also recognized the flip side of the debate and had thus opened the door to legislating the slave trade’s end once the deadline arrived. Language in the Tenth Amendment, they claimed, also said slavery could be banned in the territories. Finally, they pointed to the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment, which said that property could be seized through appropriate legislation. The bruising Missouri debates ultimately transcended arguments about the Constitution. They became an all-encompassing referendum on the American past, present, and future.

Despite the furor, debates over slavery unleashed during the Missouri Compromise did not yet develop into hardened defenses of either slave or free labor as positive good. Those would come in the coming decades, but in the meantime the uneasy consensus forged by the Missouri Debate managed to bring a measure of calm.

The Missouri debate had also deeply troubled the nation’s African Americans and Native Americans. By the time of the Missouri compromise debate, both groups saw that whites never intended them to be citizens of the United States. In fact, the debates over Missouri’s admission had offered the first sustained debate on the question of black citizenship, as Missouri’s State Constitution wanted to impose a hard ban on any future black migrants. Legislators ultimately agreed that this hard ban violated the Constitution, but reaffirmed Missouri’s ability to deny citizenship to African Americans. Americans by 1820 had endured a broad challenge, not only to their cherished ideals but also more fundamentally to their conceptions of self.

III. The Crisis Joined

Missouri’s admission to the Union in 1821 exposed deep fault lines in American society. But the Com-
promise created a new sectional consensus that most white Americans, at least, hoped would ensure a lasting peace. Through sustained debates and arguments, white Americans agreed that the Constitution could do little about slavery wherever it already existed and that slavery, with the State of Missouri as the key exception, would never expand north of the 36°30′ line.

Once again westward expansion challenged this consensus, and this time the results proved even more damaging. Tellingly, enslaved southerners were among the first to signal their discontent. A rebellion led by Denmark Vesey in 1822 threatened lives and property throughout the Carolinas. The nation’s religious leaders also expressed a rising discontent with the new status quo. The Second Great Awakening further sharpened political differences by promoting schisms within the major Protestant churches, schisms that also became increasingly sectional in nature. Between 1820 and 1846, sectionalism drew on new political parties, new religious organizations, and new reform movements.

As politics grew more democratic, leaders attacked old inequalities of wealth and power, but in doing so many pandered to a unity under white supremacy. Slavery briefly receded from the nation’s attention in the early 1820s, but that would change quickly. By the last half of the decade, slavery was back, and this time it appeared even more threatening.

Inspired by the social change of Jacksonian democracy, white men regardless of status would gain not only land and jobs, but also the right to vote, the right to serve on juries, the right to attend public schools, and the right to serve in the militia and armed forces. In this post-Missouri context, leaders arose to push the country’s new expansionist desires in aggressive new directions. As they did so, however, the sectional crisis again deepened.

The Democratic Party initially seemed to offer a compelling answer to the problems of sectionalism by promising benefits to white working men of the North, South, and West, while also uniting rural, small town, and urban residents. Indeed, huge numbers of western, southern, and northern workingmen rallied during the 1828 Presidential election behind Andrew Jackson. Slavery’s aristocratic culture was a prickly issue of potential contradiction for the workingman’s party, but Democrats nonetheless had broad appeal in the South, where most men did not own slaves. The Democratic Party tried to avoid the issue of slavery and instead sought to unite Americans around shared racial anxieties and desires to expand the nation.

Democrats were not without their critics during their decade of dominance in the 1830s. In time, the slavery issue again gained energy over ongoing dilemmas about what to do with western lands. Northerners seen as especially friendly to the South had become known as “Doughfaces” during the
Missouri debates, and as the 1830s wore on, more and more Doughfaced Democrats became vulnerable to the charge that they served the Southern slave oligarchs better than they served their own northern communities. Whites discontented with the direction of the country used the slur and other critiques to help chip away at Democratic Party majorities. The accusation that northern Democrats were lap dogs for southern slaveholders had tremendous power.

The major party challenge to the Democrats arose with the Whigs. Whig strongholds often mirrored the patterns of westward migrations out of New England. With an odd coalition of wealthy merchants, middle and upper class farmers, planters in the Upland South, and settlers in the Great Lakes, Whigs struggled to bring a cohesive message to voters during the 1830s. Their strongest support came from places like Ohio’s Western Reserve, the rural and Protestant-dominated areas of Michigan, and similar parts of Protestant and small-town Illinois, particularly the fast-growing towns and cities of the state’s northern half.

Whig leaders stressed Protestant culture, federal-sponsored internal improvements, and courted the support of a variety of reform movements, including of course temperance, Nativism, and even antislavery, though few Whigs believed in racial equality. These positions attracted a wide range of figures, including a young convert to politics named Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln admired Whig leader Henry Clay of Kentucky, and by the early 1830s, Lincoln certainly fit the image of developing Whig. A veteran of the Black Hawk War, Lincoln had re-located to New Salem, Illinois, where he worked a variety of odd jobs, living a life of thrift, self-discipline, and sobriety as he educated himself in preparation for a professional life in law and politics.

The Whig Party blamed Democrats for defending slavery at the expense of the American people, but antislavery was never a core component of the Whig platform. Several abolitionists grew so disgusted with the Whigs that they formed their own party, a true antislavery party. Activists in Warsaw, New York, a small town located outside of Buffalo, went to work and organized the antislavery Liberty Party in 1839. Liberty leaders demanded the end of slavery in the District of Columbia, the ending the interstate slave trade, and the prohibition of slavery’s further expansion into the West. But the Liberty Party also shunned women’s participation in the movement, and distanced themselves from visions of true racial egalitarianism. Few Americans voted for the party, however, and the Democrats and Whigs continued to dominate American politics.

Democrats and Whigs fostered a moment of relative calm on the slavery debate, partially aided by gag rules prohibiting discussion of antislavery petitions. Arkansas (1836) and Michigan (1837) became the newest states admitted to the Union, with Arkansas coming in as a slave state, and Michigan coming in as a free state. Michigan gained admission through
provisions established in the Northwest Ordinance, while Arkansas came in under the Missouri Compromise. Since its lands were below the line at 36° 30’ the admission of Arkansas did not threaten the Missouri consensus. The balancing act between slavery and freedom continued.

Events in Texas would shatter the balance. Independent Texas soon gained recognition from a supportive Andrew Jackson administration in 1837. But Jackson’s successor, President Martin Van Buren, also a Democrat, soon had reasons to worry about the Republic of Texas. Texas struggled with ongoing conflicts with Mexico and Indian raids from the powerful Comanche. The 1844 democratic presidential candidate James K. Polk sought to bridge the sectional divide by promising new lands to whites north and south. Polk cited the annexation of Texas and the Oregon Territory as campaign cornerstones. Yet as Polk championed the acquisition of these vast new lands, northern Democrats grew annoyed by their southern colleagues, especially when it came to Texas.

For many observers, the debates over Texas statehood illustrated that the federal government had at last moved in a clear pro-slavery direction. Texas President Sam Houston managed to secure a deal with Polk, and gained admission to the Union for Texas in 1845. Antislavery northerners were also worried about the admission of Florida, which also entered the Union as slave state in 1845. The year 1845 became a pivotal year in the memory of antislavery leaders. As Americans embraced calls to pursue their “Manifest Destiny,” antislavery voices looked at developments in Florida and Texas as signs that the sectional crisis had taken an ominous and perhaps irredeemable turn.

The 1840s opened with a number of disturbing developments for antislavery leaders. The 1842 Supreme Court case *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* ruled that the federal government’s Fugitive Slave Act trumped Pennsylvania’s personal liberty law. Antislavery activists believed that the federal government only served southern slaveholders and were trouncing the states’ rights of the North. A number of northern states reacted by passing new personal liberty laws in protest in 1843.

The rising controversy over the status of fugitive slaves swelled partly through the influence of escaped former slaves, including Frederick Douglass. Douglass’s entrance into northern politics marked an important new development in the nation’s coming sectional crisis, as the nation’s beleaguered community of freed black northerners gained perhaps its most powerful voice. Born into slavery in 1818 at Talbot County, Maryland, Douglass grew up, like many enslaved people, barely having known his own mother or date of birth. And yet because of a range of unique privileges afforded him by the circumstances of his upbringing, as well as his own pluck and determination, Douglass managed to learn how to read and write. He used these skills...
to escape from slavery in 1837, when he was just nineteen. By 1845, Douglass put the finishing touches on his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. The book launched his lifelong career as an advocate for the enslaved and the oppressed and helped further raise the visibility of black politics nationally. Other former slaves, including Sojourner Truth joined Douglass in rousing support for antislavery, as did free blacks like Maria Stewart, James McCune Smith, Martin Delany and numerous others. But black activists did more than deliver speeches. They also attacked fugitive slave laws by helping thousands to escape. The incredible career of Harriet Tubman is one of the more dramatic examples. But the forces of slavery had powerful allies at every level of government.

The year 1846 signaled new reversals to the antislavery cause, and the beginnings of a dark new era in American politics. President Polk and his Democratic allies were eager to see western lands brought into the Union, and were especially anxious to see the borders of the nation extended to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Critics of the administration blasted these efforts as little more than land-grabs on behalf of the slaveholders. Events in early 1846 seemed to justify antislavery complaints. Since Mexico had never recognized independent Texas, it continued to lay claim to its lands, even after the United States admitted it to the Union. In January 1846, Polk ordered troops to Texas to enforce claims stemming from its border dispute along the Rio Grande. Polk asked for war on May 11, 1846, and by September 1847, after campaigns conquering all or most of present-day California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming and Arizona (lands west of the Louisiana Purchase excepting for Pacific Northwest) United States forces entered Mexico City. Whigs, like Abraham Lincoln, found their protests sidelined, but antislavery voices were becoming more vocal and more powerful.

After 1846, the sectional crisis raged throughout North America. Debates swirled over whether the new lands would be slave or free. The South began defending slavery as a positive good. At the same time, Congressman David Wilmot submitted his “Wilmot Proviso” late in 1846, banning the expansion of slavery into the territories won from Mexico. The Proviso gained widespread northern support and even passed the House with bipartisan support, but in the Senate it failed.

### IV. Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

The conclusion of the Mexican War gave rise to the 1848 Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo. The treaty infuriated antislavery leaders in the United States. The spoils gained from the Mexican War were impressive, but it was clear they would help expand slavery. The United States required Mexican officials to cede the California and New Mexico Territories for $15 million dollars. With American soldiers occupying their
capital, Mexican leaders had no choice but sign or continue fighting a war they could not win. The new American territory included lands that would become the future states of California, Utah, Nevada, most of Arizona, and well as parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming.

The acquisition of so much land made it imperative to antislavery leaders that these lands not be opened to slavery. But knowing that the Liberty Party was not likely to provide a home to many moderate voters, leaders instead hoped to foster a new and more competitive party, which they called the Free Soil Party. Antislavery leaders came into the 1848 election hoping that their vision of a federal government divorced from slavery might be heard. But both the Whigs and the Democrats, nominated pro-slavery southerners. Left unrepresented, antislavery Free Soil leaders swung into action.

Demanding an alternative to the pro-slavery status quo, Free Soil leaders assembled so-called “Conscience Whigs,” like those found in Massachusetts under Charles Francis Adams, alongside western ex-Liberty Party leaders like Salmon P. Chase of Ohio. The new coalition called for a national convention in August 1848 at Buffalo, New York. A number of ex-Democrats committed to the party right away, including an important group of New Yorkers loyal to Martin Van Buren. The Free Soil Party’s platform bridged the eastern and the western leadership together and called for an end to slavery in Washington DC and a halt on slavery’s expansion in the territories. The Free Soil movement hardly made a dent in the 1848 Presidential election, but it drew more than four times the popular vote that the Liberty Party had won earlier. It was a promising start. In 1848, Free Soil leaders claimed just 10% of the popular vote, but won over a dozen House seats, and even managed to win one Senate seat in Ohio, which went to Salmon P. Chase. In Congress, Free Soil members had enough votes to swing power to either the Whigs or the Democrats.

The admission of Wisconsin as a free state in May 1848 helped cool tensions after the Texas and Florida admissions. But news from a number of failed revolutions in Europe alarmed American reformers. As exiled radicals filtered out of Europe and into the United States, a women’s rights movement also got underway in July at Seneca Falls, New York. Representing the first of such meetings ever held
in United States history, it was led by figures like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, women with deep ties to the abolitionist cause. Frederick Douglass also appeared at the convention and took part in the proceedings, where participants debated the Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances and Resolutions. By August 1848, it seemed plausible that the Free Soil Movement might tap into these reforms and build a broader coalition. In some ways that is precisely what it did. But come November, the spirit of reform failed to yield much at the polls. Whig candidate Zachary Taylor bested Democrat Lewis Cass of Michigan.

The upheavals signaled by 1848 came to a quick end. Taylor remained in office only a brief time until his unexpected death from a stomach ailment in 1850. During Taylor’s brief time in office, the fruits of the Mexican War began to spoil, threatening the whole country with sickness. While he was alive, Taylor and his administration struggled to find a good remedy. Increased clamoring for the admission of California, New Mexico, and Utah pushed the country closer to the edge. Gold had been discovered in California, and as thousands continued to pour onto the West Coast and through the trans-Mississippi West, the admission of new states loomed. In Utah, Mormons were also making claims to an independent state they called Deseret. By 1850, California wanted admission as a free state. With so many competing dynamics underway, and with the President dead and replaced by Whig Millard Fillmore, the 1850s were off to a troubling start.

Congressional leaders like Henry Clay and newer legislators like Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois were asked to broker a compromise, but this time it was clear no compromise could bridge all the diverging interests at play in the country. Clay eventually left Washington disheartened by affairs. It fell to young Stephen Douglas, then, to shepherd the bills through the Congress, which he in fact did. Legislators rallied behind the “Compromise of 1850,” an assemblage of bills passed late in 1850, managed to keep the promises of the Missouri Compromise alive.

The Compromise of 1850 tried to offer something to everyone, but in the end it only worsened the sectional crisis. For southerners, the package offered a tough new fugitive slave law that empowered the federal government to deputize regular citizens.
in assisting with the arrest of runaways. The New Mexico territory, meanwhile, newly buttressed by additional lands from the nearby State of Texas, (Texas gave away some of its lands to erase some of its debts) and the Utah Territory, would be allowed to determine their own fates as slave or free states based on popular sovereignty. The Compromise also allowed territories to submit suits directly to the Supreme Court over the status of fugitive slaves within its bounds. Washington worked on behalf of slaveholders while ignoring the interests of white working men.

None of the individual 1850 Compromise measures proved more troubling to national and international observers than the Fugitive Slave Act. In a clear bid to extend slavery’s influence throughout the country, the act created special federal commissioners to determine the fate of alleged fugitives without benefit of a jury trial or even court testimony. Under its provisions, local authorities in the North could not interfere with the capture of fugitives. Northern citizens, moreover, had to assist in the arrest of fugitive slaves when called upon by federal agents. The Fugitive Slave Act created the foundation for a massive expansion of federal power, including an alarming increase in the nation’s policing powers. Many northerners were also troubled by the way the bill undermined local and state laws. The law itself fostered corruption and the enslavement of free black northerners. The federal commissioners who heard these cases were paid $10 if they determined that the defendant was a slave and only $5 if they determined he or she was free. Many black northerners responded to the new law by heading further north to Canada.

The admission of California as the newest free state in the Union cheered many northerners, but even the admission of a vast new state full of resources and rich agricultural lands did not fully satisfy many northerners. In addition to California, northerners also gained a ban on the slave trade in Washington, D.C., but not the full emancipation abolitionists had long strived for. Texas, which had already come into the Union as a slave state, was asked to give some of its land to New Mexico. But the Compromise debates soon grew ugly.

After the Compromise of 1850, antislavery critics became increasingly certain that slaveholders had co-opted the federal government, and that a southern “Slave Power” secretly held sway in Washington, where it hoped to use its representative advantages, built into the 3/5 compromise of the Constitution, to make slavery a national institution. This idea had floated around antislavery circles for years, but in the 1850s antislavery leaders increasingly argued that

The 1852 Presidential election gave the Whigs their most stunning defeat and effectively ended their existence as a national political party. Whigs captured just 42 of the 254 electoral votes needed to win. With the Compromise of 1850 in place, with plenty of new lands for white settlers to improve, everything
seemed in its right place for a peaceful consensus to re-emerge. Antislavery feelings continued to run deep, however, and their depth revealed that with a Democratic Party misstep, a coalition united against the Democrats might yet emerge and bring them to defeat. One measure of the popularity of antislavery ideas came in 1852 when Harriet Beecher Stowe published her bestselling antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Sales for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were astronomical, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible. The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery into everyday conversation for many northerners. Despite the powerful antislavery message, Stowe’s book also reinforced many racist stereotypes. Even abolitionists struggled with the deeply ingrained racism that plagued American society. While the major success of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* bolstered the abolitionist cause, the terms outlined by the Compromise of 1850 appeared strong enough to keep the peace.

Democrats by 1853 were badly splintered along sectional lines over slavery, but they also had reasons to act with confidence. Voters had returned them to office in 1852 following the bitter fights over the Compromise of 1850. Emboldened, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas introduced a set of additional amendments to a bill drafted in late 1853 to help organize the Nebraska Territory, the last of the Louisiana Purchase lands. In 1853, the Nebraska Territory was huge, extending from the northern end of Texas to the Canadian Border. Altogether, it encompassed present-day Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado and Montana. Douglas’s efforts to amend and introduce the bill in 1854 opened dynamics that would break the Democratic Party in two and, in the process, rip the country apart.

Douglas proposed a bold plan in 1854 to cut off a large southern chunk of Nebraska and create it separately as the Kansas Territory. It was a number of goals in mind. The expansionist Democrat from Illinois wanted to organize the territory to facilitate the completion of a national railroad that would flow through Chicago. But before he had even finished introducing the bill, opposition had already mobilized. Salmon P. Chase drafted a response in northern newspapers that exposed the
Kansas-Nebraska Bill as a measure to overturn the Missouri Compromise and open western lands for slavery. Kansas-Nebraska protests emerged in 1854 throughout the North, with key meetings in Wisconsin and Michigan. Kansas would become slave or free depending on the result of local elections, elections that would be greatly influenced by migrants flooding to the state to either protect or stop the spread of slavery.

Ordinary Americans in the North increasingly resisted what they believed to be a pro-slavery federal government on their own terms. The rescues and arrests of fugitive slaves Anthony Burns in Boston and Joshua Glover in Milwaukee, for example, both signaled the rising vehemence of resistance to the nation’s 1850 fugitive slave law. The case of Anthony Burns illustrates how the Fugitive Slave Law radicalized many northerners. On May 24, 1854, 20-year-old Burns, a preacher who worked in a Boston clothing shop, was clubbed and dragged to jail. One year earlier, Burns had escaped slavery in Virginia, and a group of slave catchers had come to return him to Richmond. Word of Burns’ capture spread rapidly through Boston, and a mob gathered outside of the courthouse demanding that Burns’ release. Two days after the arrest, the crowd stormed the courthouse and shot a Deputy U.S. Marshall to death. News reached Washington, and the federal government sent soldiers. Boston was placed under Martial Law. Federal troops lined the streets of Boston as Burns was marched to a ship where he was sent back to slavery in Virginia. After spending over $40,000, the United States Government had successfully reenslaved Anthony Burns. A short time later, Burns was redeemed by abolitionists who paid $1,300 to return him to freedom, but the outrage among Bostonians only grew. And Anthony Burns was only one of hundreds of highly publicized episodes of the federal governments imposing the Fugitive Slave Law on rebellious northern populations. In the words of Amos Adams Anthony Burns, the fugitive slave, appears in a portrait at the center of this 1855. Burns’ arrest and trial, possible because of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, became a rallying cry. As a symbol of the injustice of the slave system, Burns’ treatment spurred riots and protests by abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. John Andrews (engraver), “Anthony Burns,” c. 1855. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003689280/.
Lawrence, “We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise Union Whigs & woke up stark mad Abolitionists.”

As northerners radicalized, organizations like the New England Emigrant Aid Society provided guns and other goods for pioneers willing to go to Kansas and establish the territory as antislavery through the doctrines of popular sovereignty. On all sides of the slavery issue, politics became increasingly militarized.

The year 1855 nearly derailed the northern antislavery coalition. A resurgent anti-immigrant movement briefly took advantage of the Whig collapse, and nearly stole the energy of the anti-administration forces by channeling its frustrations into fights against the large number of mostly Catholic German and Irish immigrants then flooding American cities. Calling themselves “Know-Nothings,” on account of their tendency to pretend ignorance when asked about their activities, the Know-Nothing or American Party made impressive gains, particularly in New England and the Middle Atlantic, in races throughout 1854 and 1855. But the anti-immigrant movement simply could not capture the nation’s attention in the ways the antislavery movement already had.

The antislavery political movements that started in 1854 and 1855 coalesced as the coming Presidential election of 1856 accelerated the formation of a political party. Harkening back to the founding fathers, this new party called itself the Republican Party. After a thrilling convention that helped launch the national party at Pittsburgh in February, Republicans moved into a highly charged summer expecting great things for their cause. Following an explosive speech before Congress on May 19-20, Charles Sumner was beaten by congressional representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina right on the floor of the Senate chamber. Among other accusations, Sumner accused Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina of defending slavery so he could have sexual access to black women. Butler’s cousin, representative Brooks felt that he had to defend his relative’s honor, and nearly killed Sumner as a result.

The violence in Washington pales before the many murders occurring in Kansas. Proslavery raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas. Radical abolitionist John Brown retaliated, murdering several pro-slavery Kansans in retribution. As all of this played out, the House failed to expel Brooks. Brooks resigned his seat anyway, only to be re-elected by his constituents later in the year. He received new canes emblazoned with the words “Hit him again!”
With sectional tensions at a breaking point, both parties readied for the coming Presidential election. In June 1856, the newly named Republican Party held its nominating national convention at Philadelphia, and selected Californian John Charles Frémont. Frémont’s antislavery credentials may not have pleased many abolitionists, but his dynamic and talented wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, appealed to more radical members of the coalition. The Kansas-Nebraska Debate, the organization of the Republican Party, and the 1856 Presidential Campaign all energized a new generation of political leaders, including Abraham Lincoln. Beginning with his speech at Peoria, Illinois, in 1854, Lincoln carved out a message that encapsulated better than anyone else the main ideas and visions of the Republican Party. Lincoln himself was slow to join the coalition, yet by the summer of 1856, Lincoln had fully committed to the Frémont campaign.

Despite a tremendous outpouring of support, John Frémont went down in defeat in the 1856 Presidential Election. Republicans took comfort in pointing out that Frémont had in fact won 11 of the 16 free states. This showing, they urged, was truly impressive for any party making its first run at the Presidency. Yet northern Democrats in crucial swing states remained unmoved by the Republican Party’s appeals. Ulysses S. Grant of Missouri, for example, worried that Frémont and Republicans signaled trouble for the Union itself. Grant voted for the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, believing a Republican victory might bring about disunion. In abolitionist and especially free black circles, Frémont’s defeat was more than a disappointment. Believing their fate had been sealed as permanent non-citizens, some African Americans would consider foreign emigration and colonization. Others began to explore the option of more radical and direct action against the Slave Power.

Dred Scott’s Supreme Court case made clear that the federal government was no longer able or willing to ignore the issue of slavery. More than that, all black Americans, Justice Taney declared, could never be citizens of the United States. Though seemingly a disastrous decision for abolitionists, this controversial ruling actually increased the ranks of the abolitionist movement. Photograph of Dred Scott, 1857. Wikimedia.
V. From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

White antislavery leaders in the North were left to wonder what happened in November 1856, but few took the news too hard. They hailed Frémont’s defeat as a “glorious” one and looked ahead to the party’s future successes. For those still in slavery, or hoping to see loved ones freed, the news was of course much harder to take. The Republican Party had promised the rise of an antislavery coalition, but voters rebuked it. The lessons seemed clear enough.

Kansas loomed large over the 1856 election, darkening the national mood. The story of voter fraud in Kansas had begun years before in 1854, when nearby Missourians first started crossing the border to tamper with the Kansas elections. Noting this, critics at the time attacked the Pierce administration for not living up to the ideals of popular sovereignty by ensuring fair elections. From there, the crisis only deepened. Kansas voted to come into the Union as a free state, but the federal government refused to recognize their votes and instead recognized a sham pro-slavery legislature.

The sectional crisis had at last become a national crisis. “Bleeding Kansas” was the first place to demonstrate that the sectional crisis could easily, and in fact already was, exploding into a full-blown national crisis. As the national mood grew increasingly grim, Kansas attracted militants representing the extreme sides of the slavery debate.

In the days after the 1856 Presidential election, Buchanan made his plans for his time in office clear. He talked with Chief Justice Roger Taney on inauguration day about a court decision he hoped to see handled during his time in office. Indeed, not long after the inauguration, the Supreme Court handed down a decision that would come to define Buchanan’s Presidency. The Dred Scott decision, Scott v. Sandford, ruled that black Americans could not be citizens of the United States. This gave the Buchanan administration and its southern allies a direct repudiation of the Missouri Compromise. The court ruled that Scott, a Missouri slave, had no right to sue in United States courts. The Dred Scott decision signaled that the federal
government was now fully committed to extending slavery as far and as wide as it might want.

The Dred Scott decision seemed to settle the sectional crisis by making slavery fully national, but in reality it just exacerbated sectional tensions further. In 1857, Buchanan sent U.S. military forces to Utah, hoping to subdue Utah’s Mormon communities. This action, however, led to renewed charges, many of them leveled from within his own party, that the administration was abusing its powers. Far more important than the Utah invasion, however, was the ongoing events in Kansas. It was Kansas that at last proved to many northerners that the sectional crisis would not go away unless slavery also went away.

The Illinois Senate race in 1858 put the scope of the sectional crisis on full display. Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln challenged the greatly influential Democrat Stephen Douglas. Pandering to appeals to white supremacy, Douglas hammered the Republican opposition as a “Black Republican” party bent on racial equality. The Republicans, including Lincoln, were thrown on the defensive. Democrats hung on as best they could, but the Republicans won the House of Representatives and picked up seats in the Senate. Lincoln actually lost his contest with Stephen Douglas, but in the process firmly established himself as a leading national Republican. After the 1858 elections, all eyes turned to 1860. Given the Republican Party’s successes since 1854, it was expected that the 1860 Presidential election might produce the nation’s first antislavery president.

In the troubled decades since the Missouri Compromise, the nation slowly tore itself apart. Congressman clubbed each other nearly to death on the floor of the Congress, and by the middle 1850s Americans were already at war on the Kansas and Missouri plains. Across the country, cities and towns were in various stages of revolt against federal authority. Fighting spread even further against Indians
in the Far West and against Mormons in Utah. The nation’s militants anticipated a coming breakdown, and worked to exploit it. John Brown, fresh from his actions in Kansas, moved east and planned more violence. Assembling a team from across the West, including black radicals from Oberlin, Ohio, and throughout communities in Canada West, Brown hatched a plan to attack Harper’s Ferry, a federal weapon’s arsenal in Virginia (now West Virginia). He would use the weapons to lead a slave revolt. Brown approached Frederick Douglass, though Douglass refused to join.

Brown’s raid embarked on October 16. By October 18, a command under Robert E. Lee had crushed the revolt. Many of Brown’s men, including his own sons, were killed, but Brown himself lived and was imprisoned. Brown prophesied while in prison that the nation’s crimes would only be purged with blood. He went to the gallows in December 1859. Northerners made a stunning display of sympathy on the day of his execution. Southerners took their reactions to mean that the coming 1860 election would be, in many ways, a referendum on secession and disunion.

Republicans wanted little to do with Brown and instead tried to portray themselves as moderates opposed to both abolitionists and proslavery expansionists. In this climate, the parties opened their contest for the 1860 Presidential election. The Democratic Party fared poorly as its southern delegates bolted its national convention at Charleston and ran their own candidate, Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky. Hoping to field a candidate who might nonetheless manage to bridge the broken party’s factions, the Democrats decided to meet again at Baltimore, and nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

The Republicans, meanwhile, held their boisterous convention in Chicago. The Republican platform made the party’s antislavery commitments clear, also making wide promises to its white constituents, particularly westerners, with the promise of new land, transcontinental railroads, and broad support of public schools. Abraham Lincoln, a candidate few outside of Illinois truly expected to win, nonetheless proved far less polarizing than the other names on the ballot.
Lincoln won the nomination, and with the Democrats in disarray, Republicans knew their candidate Lincoln had a good chance of winning.

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6, gaining just 40% of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, southern states were organizing secession conventions. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a series of compromises, but a clear pro-southern bias meant they had little chance of gaining Republican acceptance. Crittenden’s plan promised renewed enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, and offered a plan to keep slavery in the nation’s capital. Republicans by late 1860 knew that the voters who had just placed them in power did not want them to cave on these points, and southern states proceed with their plans to leave the Union. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede, and issued its “Declaration of the Immediate Causes.” The Declaration highlighted failure of the federal government to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act over competing personal liberty laws in northern states. After the war many southerners claimed that secession was primarily motivated by a concern to preserve states’ rights, but the very first ordinance of secession’s primary complaint, and many that came after, listed the federal government’s failure to exert its authority over the northern states.

The year 1861, then, saw the culmination of the secession crisis. Before he left for Washington, Lincoln told those who had gathered in Springfield to wish him well and that he faced a “task greater than Washington’s” in the years to come. Southerners were also learning the challenges of forming a new nation. The seceded states grappled with internal divisions right way, as states with slaveholders sometimes did not support the newly seceded states. In January, for example, Delaware rejected secession. But states in the lower south adopted a different course. The State of Mississippi seceded. Later in the month, the states of Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana also all left the Union. By early February, Texas had also joined the newly seceded states. In February, southerners drafted a constitution protecting slavery and named a westerner, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, as their President. When Abraham Lincoln acted upon his constitutional mandate as Commander in Chief following his inauguration on March 4, rebels calling themselves members of the Confederate States of America opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Within days, Abraham Lincoln would demand 75,000 volunteers from the North to crush the rebellion, and the American Civil War began.

VI. Conclusion

Slavery had long divided the politics of the United States. In time, these divisions became both sectional and irreconcilable. The first and most ominous sign of a coming sectional storm occurred over debates surrounding the admission of the State of Missouri in 1821. As westward expansion continued, these fault
lines grew even more ominous, particularly as the United States managed to seize even more lands from its war with Mexico. As the country seemed to teeter ever closer to a full-throated endorsement of slavery, however, an antislavery coalition arose in the middle 1850s calling itself the Republican Party. Eager to cordon off slavery and confine it to where it already existed, such sentiment won presidential election of 1860 and threw the nation on the path to war.

Throughout this period, the mainstream of the antislavery movement remained committed to a peaceful resolution of the slavery issue through efforts understood to foster the “ultimate extinction” of slavery in due time. But as the secession crisis revealed, the South could not tolerate a federal government working against the interests of slavery’s expansion and decided to take a gamble on war with the United States. Secession, in the end, raised the possibility of emancipation through war, a possibility most Republicans knew, of course, had always been an option, but one they nonetheless hoped would never be necessary. By 1861 all bets were off, and the fate of slavery depended upon war.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
### 1850s Timeline: 1850 - 1861

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>- Whig, Millard Fillmore, became president after John Taylor died. The bills making up the Compromise of 1850 passed. California became a free state in the Union. The American (Know-Nothing) Party formed.</td>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>- Harriet Beecher Stowe's <em>Uncle Tom's Cabin</em> published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>- Democrat, Franklin Pierce, elected president.</td>
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<td>1853</td>
<td>- Gadsden Purchase.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>- Supreme Court ruled on <em>Dred Scott v. Sandford</em>. Panic of 1857 occurred.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>- Pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution from Kansas rejected nationally. Lincoln-Douglas Debates occurred during the election campaign for Douglas’ Senate seat from Illinois.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>- John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>- Election of 1860 showed the divide in the nation sectionally, with four sectionally-influenced parties running candidates. Abraham Lincoln elected president, and South Carolina seceded from the Union.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>- Early in the year, six Deep South states seceded, and the Confederate States of America formed with its own constitution. Lincoln took office.</td>
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UNIT 11

THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War: Concluding Thoughts

Per the theme of the class, the Civil War is the end result of failed compromises over the sectional differences (geographic, economic, political, ideological, and cultural) that divided the nation since the Colonial Era. Though fortunately for humanity a result of the conduct of the war was the abolition of slavery, for the majority of white Americans at the time (save the minority of abolitionist-minded persons) the agenda for fighting the war was to reunite the Union. Northerners argued that, per the Constitution, the South had left the Union illegally, while Southerners arguing from a state rights (state sovereignty) point of view, dismissed such arguments as invalid to the original, philosophical construction of the Union under the Constitution. Throughout the war, the South’s aim was similar to that of the colonies when they fought against Great Britain during the Revolutionary War: to fight to achieve independence and foreign recognition. For the South a key strategy was the use of King Cotton Diplomacy, leveraging the economics of the European demand for cotton (particularly cotton-dependent Great Britain) to bear out European recognition of the Confederate States of America.

Northern diplomatic efforts thwarted this attempt. The Union’s strategy was to blockade the South, attack the South on eastern and western fronts, defend against invasions, root out disloyalty within the North, and prevent European nations (especially Great Britain) from recognizing the Confederacy as a legitimate country. In order to do so, Northerners argued that the South’s cause was not independence but rather rebellion against the Union (treason), and thus as a Civil War foreign intervention would not be appropriate and moreover deemed an act of war. This strategy, though precarious and not without its faults, worked, particularly when Union military successes showed that the Confederacy most likely would not endure militarily or politically.

Within both sections, political battles between regional factions continued. In the South, wealthy, eastern plantation owners found themselves politically challenged by westerners. In the North, War Democrats under Stephen Arnold Douglas and Republicans joined together for the duration of the war as the National Union Party. Northern anti-war sentiments grew as a result of the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, and pro-Southern Peace Democrats (or Copperheads as they were called) started to win local and state elections. In 1864, General George McClellan ran as the Democratic Party’s candidate against Abraham Lincoln on a moderate platform calling for peace negotiations with the South to end the war and restore the sectional economies. It is telling that though Lincoln won a large majority of the Electoral College. McClellan obtained 45% of the popular vote. The North as a whole was not unified behind the Emancipation Proclamation and the agenda of
UNIT 11
THE CIVIL WAR

the Radical Republicans in Congress and Lincoln’s administration.

The war impacted not only the lives of those who fought in the war but also those on the home front and those enslaved. For women and men left at home in the North, enterprising economics and a willingness to use the northern characteristic of organizing for reform (which during the war manifested in organizations that worked to support the war effort and the troops) helped sustain the North’s war effort. In the South, slaves hoped for emancipation, and after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 as Union troops won over Confederates in battles throughout the South slaves in the states in rebellion (not all slave-holding states) became free persons. Due to its lack of industrial infrastructure and failing economy during the war, women, children and the elderly in the South faced a shortage of supplies and foods. In Richmond, Virginia in 1863, as a result of these conditions, a mob of women broke out into a violent riot looting stores and smashing windows, as they shouted for bread. On the whole due to its industrial infrastructure, diversified economy, and culture of reform, the North was more prepared and able to sustain its endeavors over the duration of the War.

Toward war’s end and after, and Radical Republicans firmly in charge at the national level, the nation turned its eyes toward reconstructing the Union politically and managing the conditions facing the newly freed slave population. Though eventually the politics of Reconstruction led to the constitutional reunification of the states, the American public was not ready to accept civil, political, nor social equality for African American males. But, one thing was clear, the Jeffersonian vision for America and the related state sovereignty (state rights) interpretations of the Constitution no longer were considered viable, legal interpretations or options. Hamiltonianism in most regards won the Civil War and shaped the character, politics, economics, culture – and, the destiny of the US going into the 20th century and beyond.

Content provided by Dr. June Klees
I. Introduction

The American Civil War, the bloodiest in the nation’s history, resulted in approximately 750,000 deaths. The war touched the life of nearly every American as military mobilization reached levels never seen before or since. The vast majority of northerners went to war to preserve the Union, but the war ultimately transformed into a struggle to eradicate slavery. African Americans, both enslaved and free pressed the issue of emancipation and nurtured this transformation. Simultaneously, women thrust themselves into critical wartime roles while navigating a world without many men of military age. The Civil War was a defining event in the history of the United States and, for the Americans thrust into it, a wrenching one.

II. The Election of 1860 and Secession

As the fall of 1860 approached, a four-way race for the Presidency—and the future of America—emerged. In April, the Democratic Party convened in Charleston, South Carolina, the bastion of secessionist thought in the South. The goal was to nominate a candidate for the party ticket, but the party was deeply divided. Northern Democrats pulled for Senator Stephen Douglas, a pro-slavery moderate championing popular sovereignty, while Southern Democrats were intent on endorsing someone other than Douglas. The parties leaders refusal to include a pro-slavery
platform resulted in Southern delegates walking out of the convention, preventing Douglas from gaining the two-thirds majority required for a nomination. A subsequent convention in Baltimore nominated Douglas for the Democratic ticket, while southerners nominated current Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky as their presidential candidate. The nation’s oldest party had split over differences in policy toward slavery.

Initially, the Republicans were hardly unified around a single candidate themselves. Several leading Republican men vied for their party’s nomination. A consensus emerged at the May 1860 convention that the party’s nominee would need to carry all the free states—for only in that situation could a Republican nominee potentially win. New York Senator William Seward, a leading contender, was passed over. Seward’s pro-immigrant position posed a potential obstacle, particularly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, as a relatively unknown but likable politician, rose from a pool of potential candidates and was selected by the delegates on the third ballot. The electoral landscape was further complicated through the emergence of a fourth candidate, Tennessee’s John Bell, heading the Constitutional Union Party. The Constitutional Unionists, comprised of former Whigs who teamed up with some southern Democrats, made it their mission to avoid the specter of secession while doing little else to address the issues tearing the country apart.

Abraham Lincoln’s nomination proved a great windfall for the Republican Party. Lincoln carried all free states with the exception of New Jersey (which he split with Douglas). 81.2% of the voting electorate came out to vote—at that point the highest ever for a presidential election. Lincoln’s received fewer than 40% of the popular vote, but with the field so split, that percentage turned into a winning 180 electoral votes. Lincoln was trailed by Breckenridge with his 72 electoral votes, carrying 11 of the 15 slave states, Bell came in third with 39 electoral votes, with Douglas coming in last, only able to garner twelve electoral votes despite carrying almost 30% of the popular vote. Since the Republican platform prohibited the expansion of slavery in future western states, all future Confederate states, with the exception of Virginia, excluded Lincoln’s name from their ballots.

The election of Lincoln and the perceived threat to the institution of slavery proved too much for the deep Southern states. South Carolina acted almost immediately, calling a convention to declare
secession. On December 20, 1860, the South Carolina convention voted unanimously 169-0 to dissolve their Union with the United States. The other states across the Deep South quickly followed suit. Mississippi adopted their own resolution on January 9, 1861, Florida followed on January 10, Alabama January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. Texas was the only state to put the issue up for a popular vote, but secession was widely popular throughout the South.

Confederates quickly shed their American identity and adopted a new Confederate nationalism. Confederate nationalism was based on several ideals, foremost among these being slavery. As Confederate Vice President Andrew Stephens stated in his “Cornerstone Speech,” the Confederacy’s “foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery… is his natural and normal condition.” The election of Lincoln in 1860 demonstrated that the South was politically overwhelmed. Slavery was omnipresent in the pre-war South, and it served as the most common frame of reference for unequal power. To a Southern man, there was no fate more terrifying than the thought of being reduced to the level of a slave. Religion likewise shaped Confederate nationalism and identity, as southerners believed that the Confederacy was fulfilling God’s will. The Confederacy even veered from the American constitution by explicitly invoking Christianity in their founding document. Yet in every case, all rationale for secession could be thoroughly tied to slavery. “Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery– the greatest material interest of the world”, proclaimed the Mississippi statement of secession. Thus for the original seven Confederate states (and those who would subsequently join), slavery’s existence was the sine qua non for the fledging Confederacy.

Not all southerners participated in Confederate nationalism. Unionist southerners, most common in the upcountry where slavery was weakest, retained their loyalty to the Union, joining the Union army and working to defeat the Confederacy. Black southerners,
most of whom were slaves, overwhelmingly supported the Union, often running away from plantations and forcing the Union army to reckon with slavery.

President James Buchanan would not directly address the issue of secession prior to his term’s end in early March. Any effort to try and solve the issue therefore fell upon Congress, specifically a “Committee of Thirteen” including prominent men such as Stephen Douglas, William Seward, Robert Toombs, and John Crittenden. In what became known as “Crittenden’s Compromise,” Senator Crittenden proposed a series of Constitutional Amendments that guaranteed slavery in southern states/territories, denied the Federal Government interstate slave trade regulatory power, and offered to compensate slave owners of unrecovered fugitive slaves. The Committee of Thirteen ultimately voted down the measure and it likewise failed in the full Senate vote (25-23). Reconciliation appeared impossible.

The seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama on February 4th to organize a new nation. The delegates selected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as president and established a capital in Montgomery, Alabama (it would move to Richmond in May). Whether other states of the Upper South would join the Confederacy remained uncertain. By the early spring of 1861, North Carolina and Tennessee had not held secession conventions, while voters in Virginia, Missouri, and Arkansas initially voted down seces-

III. A War for Union 1861-1863

In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared secession “legally void.” While he did not intend to invade Southern states, he would use force to maintain possession of federal property within seceded states. Attention quickly shifted to the federal installation of Fort Sumter. Union forces, under the command of Major Robert Anderson, held Charleston, South Carolina’s Ft. Sumter in April 1861. The fort was in need of supplies, and Lincoln intended to resupply it. South Carolina called for U.S. soldiers to evacuate the fort and Major Anderson refused. After decades of sectional tension, official hostilities erupted on April 12, 1861, when Confederate Brigadier General P. G. T. Beauregard fired on the fort. Anderson surrendered on April 13th and the Union troops evacuated. In response to the attack, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve three months to suppress the rebellion. The American Civil War had begun.

The assault on Fort Sumter, and subsequent call for troops, provoked several Upper South states to join
the Confederacy. In total, eleven states renounced their allegiance to the United States of America. The new Confederate nation was predicated on the institution of slavery and the promotion of any and all interests that reinforced that objective. Some southerners couched their defense of slavery as a preservation of states rights. But in order to protect slavery, the Confederate nation created a central government that ruled over the states even more than what the constitution called for—an irony not lost on many.

Shortly after Lincoln’s call for troops, the Union adopted General-in-Chief Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan to suppress the rebellion. This strategy intended to strangle the Confederacy by cutting off access to coastal ports and inland waterways via a naval blockade, while ground troops entered the interior. Like an anaconda snake, they planned to surround and squeeze the Confederacy.

The Border States of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky maintained geographic, social, political, and economic connections to both the North and the South. All five were immediately critical to the outcome of the conflict. Abraham Lincoln famously quipped “I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game.” Lincoln and his military advisors realized that the loss of the Border States could mean a significant decrease in Union resources and threaten the capital in Washington. Consequently, Lincoln hoped to foster loyalty among their citizens, so that Union forces could minimize their occupation in the regions and deploy soldiers everywhere. In spite of terrible guerrilla warfare in Missouri and Kentucky, the four Border States remained loyal to the Union throughout the war.

Foreign countries, primarily in Europe, also watched the unfolding war with deep interest. The United States represented the greatest example of democratic...
thought and ideals at the time, and individuals from as far afield as Britain, France, Spain, Russia and beyond closely followed events across the Atlantic Ocean. If the democratic experiment within the United States failed, many democratic activists in Europe wondered what hope might exist for such experiments elsewhere. Conversely, those with close ties to the cotton industry earnestly watched in the spring of 1861. War meant the possibility of disruption to their cotton produced on the backs of slave labor, and disruption could have catastrophic ramifications in commercial and financial markets abroad.

While Lincoln, his cabinet, and the War Department devised strategies to defeat the rebel insurrection, black Americans quickly forced the issue of slavery as a primary issue in the debate. As early as 1861, black Americans implored the Lincoln administration to serve in the army and navy. Lincoln, who initially waged a conservative, limited war, believed that the presence of African American troops would threaten the loyalty of slave holding border states, and white volunteers who might refuse to serve alongside black men. However, army commanders could not ignore the growing populations of formerly enslaved people who escaped to freedom behind Union army lines. These former enslaved people took a proactive stance early in the war and forced the federal government to act. As the number of refugees ballooned, Lincoln and Congress found it harder to avoid the issue.

In May 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors’ heads and began accepting fugitive slaves who came to Fortress Monroe in Virginia. In order to avoid the issue of the slaves’ freedom, Butler reasoned that runaway slaves were “contraband of war,” and he had as much a right to seize them as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons. Later that summer Congress affirmed Butler’s policy in the First Confiscation Act. The act left “contrabands,” as these runaways were called, in a state of limbo. Once a slave escaped to Union lines, her master’s claim was nullified. She was not, however, a free citizen of the United States. Runaways lived in “contraband camps,” where disease and malnutrition were rampant. The men were required to perform the drudgework of war: raising fortifications, cooking
meals, and laying railroad tracks. Still, life as a contraband offered a potential path to freedom, and thousands of slaves seized the opportunity.

Fugitive slaves posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers found such a policy unchristian. Even those indifferent to slavery were reluctant to turn away potential laborers or help the enemy by returning his property. Also, fugitive slaves could provide useful information on the local terrain and the movements of Confederate troops. Union officers became particularly reluctant to turn away fugitive slaves when Confederate commanders began forcing slaves to work on fortifications. Every slave who escaped to Union lines was a loss to the Confederate war effort.

Any hopes for a brief conflict were eradicated three months after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter when Union and Confederate forces met at the Battle of Bull Run, near Manassas, Virginia. While not particularly deadly, the Confederate victory proved that the Civil War would be long and costly. Furthermore, in response to the embarrassing Union rout, Lincoln removed Brigadier General Irvin McDowell of command and promoted Major General George B. McClellan to commander of the newly formed Army of the Potomac. For nearly a year after the First Battle of Bull Run, the Eastern Theater remained relatively silent. Smaller engagements only resulted in a bloody stalemate.

But while the military remained quiet, the same could not be said of Republicans in Washington. The absence of fractious, stalling Southerners in Congress allowed Republicans to finally pass the Whig economic package, including the Homestead Act, the Land-Grant College Act (a.k.a. Morrill Act), and the Pacific Railroad Act. The federal government also began moving toward a more nationally controlled currency system (the greenback) and the creation of banks with national characteristics. Such acts proved instrumental in the expansion and evolution of the federal government, industry, and political parties moving into the post-war period.

Enslaved African Americans who took freedom into their own hands and ran to Union lines congregated in what were called contraband camps, which existed alongside Union army camps. As is evident in the photograph, these were crude, disorganized, and dirty places. But they were still centers of freedom for those fleeing slavery. Contraband camp, Richmond, Va, 1865. The Camp of the Contrabands on the Banks of the Mississippi, Fort Pickering, Memphis, Tenn, 1862. American Antiquarian Society, from Shades of Gray and Blue. Music was intrinsic to both soldiers' and civilians' lives throughout the war. In 1863, "When This Cruel War Is Over," sometimes referred to by part of its chorus, "weeping, sad and lonely," became popular as both soldiers and civilians recognized the probability that they would never see their loved ones again. Referring to the "lonely, wounded, even dying, calling but in vain," the song dwelled on battlefield horrors, causing some commanders to restrict its use. The themes of popular songs changed over the course of the war, as feelings of inevitable success alternated with feelings of terror and despair.
The Democratic Party, absent its southern leaders, divided into two camps. War Democrats largely stood behind President Lincoln. “Peace Democrats”—also known as “Copperheads”—clashed frequently with both War Democrats and Republicans. Copperheads were sympathetic to the Confederacy; they exploited public anti-war sentiment (often the result of a lost battle or mounting casualties) and tried to push President Lincoln to negotiate an immediate peace, regardless of political leverage or bargaining power. Had the Copperheads succeeded in bringing about immediate peace, the Union would have been forced to recognize the Confederacy as a separate and legitimate government and the institution of slavery would have remained intact.

While Washington buzzed with political activity, military life filled with relative monotony punctuated by brief periods of horror. Daily life for a Civil War soldier was one of routine. A typical day began around 6 am and involved drill, marching, lunch break, and more drilling followed by policing the camp. Weapon inspection and cleaning followed, perhaps one final drill, dinner, and taps around 9 or 9:30 pm. Soldiers in both armies grew weary of the routine. Picketing or foraging afforded welcome distractions to the monotony.

Soldiers devised clever ways of dealing with the boredom of camp life. The most common activity was writing. These were highly literate armies; nine out of every ten Federals and eight out of every ten Confederates could read and write. Letters home served as a tether linking soldiers to their loved ones. Soldiers also read; newspapers were in high demand. News from other theatres of war, events in Europe, politics in Washington and Richmond, and local concerns were voraciously sought and traded. While there were nurses, camp followers, and some women who disguised themselves as men, camp life was overwhelmingly male. Soldiers drank liquor, smoked tobacco, gambled, and swore. Social commentators feared that when these men returned home, with their hard-drinking and irreligious ways, all decency, faith, and temperance would depart. But not all methods of distraction were detrimental. Soldiers also organized debate societies, composed music, sang songs, wrestled, raced horses, boxed, and played sports.

Neither side could consistently provide supplies for their soldiers, so it was not uncommon, though officially forbidden, for common soldiers to trade...
with the enemy. Confederate soldiers prized northern newspapers and coffee. Northerners were glad to exchange these for southern tobacco. Supply shortages and poor sanitation were synonymous with Civil War armies. The close proximity of thousands of men bred disease. Lice were soldiers’ daily companions.

Music was popular among the soldiers of both armies, creating a diversion from the boredom and horror of the war. As a result, soldiers often sang on fatigue duty and while in camp. Favorite songs, including “Lorena,” “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Just Before the Battle, Mother,” often reminded the soldiers of home. Dances held in camp offered another way to enjoy music. Since there were often very few women nearby, soldiers would dance with one another.

When the Civil War broke out, one of the most popular songs among soldiers and civilians was “John Brown’s Body” which began “John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave.” Started as a Union anthem praising John Brown’s actions at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, then used by Confederates to vilify Brown, both sides’ version of the song stressed that they were on the right side. Eventually the words to Julia Ward Howe’s poem “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” were set to the melody, further implying Union success. The themes of popular songs changed over the course of the war, as feelings of inevitable success alternated with feelings of terror and despair.

After an extensive delay on the part of Union commander George McClellan, his 120,000 man Army of the Potomac moved via ship to the peninsula between the York and James Rivers in Virginia. Rather than crossing overland via the former battlefield at Manassas Junction, McClellan attempted to swing around the Rebel forces and enter the capital of Richmond before they knew what hit them. McClellan, however, was an overly cautious man who consistently overestimated his adversaries’ numbers to his detriment. This cautious approach played into the Confederate favor on the outskirts of Richmond. Recently appointed commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Confederate General Robert E. Lee, forced McClellan to retreat from Richmond and
his “Peninsular Campaign” became a tremendous failure.

Union forces met with little success in the East, but the Western Theater provided hope for the United States. In February 1862, Union General Ulysses S. Grant’s capture of Confederate Forts Henry and Donelson along the Tennessee River marked the opening of the Western Theater. Fighting in the West greatly differed from that in the East. At the First Battle of Bull Run, for example, two large armies fought for control of the nations’ capitals; while in the West, Union and Confederate forces fought for control of the rivers, since the Mississippi River and its tributaries were a key tenet of the Union’s Anaconda Plan. One of the deadliest of these clashes occurred along the Tennessee River at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862. This battle, lasting only two days, was the costliest single battle in American history up to that time. The Union victory shocked both the Union and the Confederacy with approximately 23,000 casualties, a number that exceeded casualties from all of the United States’ previous wars combined. The subsequent capture of New Orleans by Union forces proved a decisive blow to the Confederacy and capped a Western Theater spring of success in 1862.

The Union and Confederate navies helped or hindered army movements around the many marine environments of the southern United States. And

The creation of black regiments was another kind of innovation during the Civil War. Northern free blacks and newly freed slaves joined together under the leadership of white officers to fight for the Union cause. This novelty was not only beneficial for the Union war effort; it also showed the Confederacy that the Union sought to destroy the foundational institution (slavery) upon which their nation was built. William Morris Smith, “[District of Columbia. Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry, at Fort Lincoln],” between 1863 and 1866. Library of Congress.

each navy employed the latest technology to outmatch the other. The Confederate Navy, led by Stephen Russell Mallory, had the unenviable task of constructing a fleet from scratch and trying to fend off a vastly better equipped Union Navy. Led by Gideon Welles of Connecticut, the Union Navy successfully implemented General-in-Chief Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan. The future of naval warfare also emerged in the spring of 1862 as two “ironclad” warships fought to a duel at Hampton Roads, Virginia. The age of the wooden sail was gone and naval warfare would be fundamentally altered. Despite these advances in naval technology, African Americans on the ground were complicating Union war aims to an even greater degree.
By the summer of 1862, the actions of black Americans were pushing the Union towards a full-blown war of emancipation. Following up on the First Confiscation Act, in April 1862, Congress abolished the institution of slavery in the District of Columbia. In July 1862, Congress passed the 2nd Confiscation Act, effectively emancipating slaves that came under Union control. Such legislation led to even more blacks making their way into Union lines and putting further pressure on the Lincoln administration to contend with the future of slavery. For his part, Abraham Lincoln evolved in his thinking on the issue. By the summer of 1862, Lincoln first floated the idea of an Emancipation Proclamation to members of his Cabinet. By August 1862, he proposed the first iteration of the Emancipation Proclamation. While his cabinet supported such an idea, Secretary of State William Seward insisted that Lincoln wait for a “decisive” Union victory so as not to appear too desperate a measure on the part of a failing government.

This decisive moment that prompted the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation would occur in the fall of 1862 along Antietam creek in Maryland. Emboldened by their success in the previous spring and summer, Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis planned to win a decisive victory in Union territory and end the war. On September 17, 1862, McClellan and Lee’s forces collided at the Battle of Antietam near the town of Sharpsburg. This battle was the first major battle of the Civil War to occur on Union soil and it remains the bloodiest single day in American history with over 20,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing in just twelve hours.

Despite the Confederate withdrawal and the high death toll, the Battle of Antietam was not a decisive Union victory. It did, however, result in enough of a victory for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in areas under Confederate control. Furthermore, there were significant exemptions to the Emancipation Proclamation including the border states, and parts of other states in the Confederacy. A far cry from a universal end to slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation nevertheless proved vital in solidifying the Union’s shift in war aims from one
of Union to Emancipation. Framing it as a war measure, Lincoln and his Cabinet hoped that stripping the Confederacy of their labor force would not only debilitate the Southern economy, but also weaken Confederate morale. Furthermore, the Battle of Antietam and the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation all but ensured that the Confederacy would not be recognized by European powers. Nevertheless, Confederates continued fighting; and Union and Confederate forces clashed again at Fredericksburg, Virginia in December 1862. The Battle of Fredericksburg was a Confederate victory that resulted in staggering Union casualties.

*Content provided by The American Yawp*
IV. War for Emancipation
1863-1865

As United States armies penetrated deeper into the Confederacy, requiring increased numbers of troops to occupy the South and battle rebel armies, politicians and the Union high command came to understand the necessity, and benefit, of enlisting African American men into the army and navy. Although a few commanders began forming black units in 1862, such as Massachusetts abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s First South Carolina Volunteers (the first regiment of black soldiers), widespread enlistment did not occur until the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. “And I further declare and make known,” Lincoln’s Proclamation read, “that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.”

The language describing black enlistment indicated Lincoln’s implicit desire to segregate African American troops from the main campaigning armies of white soldiers. “I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us,” Lincoln remarked in August 1863 about black soldiering. Although more than 180,000 black men (ten percent of the Union army) served during the war, the majority of United States Colored Troops (USCT) remained stationed behind the lines as garrison forces, often laboring and performing non-combat roles.

African American soldiers in the Union army endured rampant discrimination and earned less pay than white soldiers, while also facing the possibility of being murdered or sold into slavery if captured by Confederate forces. James Henry Gooding, a black corporal in the famed 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, wrote to Abraham Lincoln in September 1863, questioning why he and his fellow volunteers were paid less than white men. Gooding argued that, because he and his brethren were born in the United States and selflessly left their private lives and to enter the army, they should be treated “as American SOLDIERS, not as menial hirelings.”

African American soldiers defied the inequality of military service and used their positions in the army to reshape society, North and South. The majority of USCT (United States Colored Troops) had once been enslaved, and their presence as armed, blue-clad soldiers sent shockwaves throughout the Confederacy. To their friends and families, African American
soldiers symbolized the embodiment of liberation and the destruction of slavery. To white southerners, they represented the utter disruption of the Old South’s racial and social hierarchy. As members of armies of occupation, black soldiers wielded martial authority in towns and plantations. At the end of the war, as a black soldier marched by a cluster of Confederate prisoners, he noticed his former master among the group. “Hello, massa,” the soldier exclaimed, “bottom rail on top dis time!”

In addition to a majority of USCT garrisoning and occupying the South, other African American soldiers performed admirably on the battlefield, shattering white myths that docile, cowardly black men would fold in the maelstrom of war. Black troops fought in more than 400 battles and skirmishes, including Milliken’s Bend and Port Hudson, Louisiana; Fort Wagner, South Carolina; Nashville; and the final campaigns to capture Richmond, Virginia. Fifteen black soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the highest honor bestowed for military heroism. Through their voluntarism, service, battlefield contributions, and even death, African American soldiers laid their claims for citizenship. “Once let a black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S.” Frederick Douglass, the great black abolitionist, proclaimed, “and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.”

Many slaves accompanied their masters in the Confederate army. They served their masters as “camp servants,” cooking their meals, raising their tents, and carrying their supplies. The Confederacy also impressed slaves to perform manual labor. There are three important points to make about these “Confederate” slaves. First, their labor was almost always coerced. Second, people are complicated and have varying, often contradictory loyalties. A slave could hope in general that the Confederacy would lose but at the same time be concerned for the safety of his master and the Confederate soldiers he saw on a daily basis.

Finally, white Confederates did not see African Americans as their equals, much less as soldiers. There was never any doubt that black laborers and camp servants were property. Though historians disagree on the matter, it is a stretch to claim that not a single African American ever fired a gun for the Confederacy; a camp servant whose master died in battle might well pick up his dead master’s gun and continue firing, if for no other reason than to protect himself. But this was always on an informal basis. The Confederate government did, in an act of desperation, pass a law in March 1865 allowing for the enlistment of black soldiers, but only a few dozen African Americans (mostly Richmond hospital workers) had enlisted by the war’s end.

As 1863 dawned, Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia continued its offensive strategy in the East. One of the war’s major battles occurred near the village of Chancellorsville, Virginia between April 30 and
May 6, 1863. While the Battle of Chancellorsville was an outstanding Confederate victory against Union Major General Joseph Hooker (who replaced Ambrose Burnside as the commander of the Army of the Potomac after his defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg), it also resulted in heavy casualties and the mortal wounding of Confederate Major General “Stonewall” Jackson.

In spite of Jackson’s death, Lee continued his offensive against Federal forces and invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. During the three-day battle (July 1-3) at Gettysburg, heavy casualties crippled both sides. Yet, the devastating July 3 infantry assault on the Union center, also known as Pickett’s Charge, caused Lee to retreat from Pennsylvania. The Gettysburg Campaign was Lee’s final northern incursion and the Battle of Gettysburg remains the bloodiest battle of the war, and in American history, with 51,000 casualties.

Concurrently in the West, Union forces continued their movement along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Grant launched his campaign against Vicksburg, Mississippi in the winter of 1862. Known as the “Gibraltar of the West,” Vicksburg was the last holdout in the West, and its seizure would enable uninhibited travel for Union forces along the Mississippi River. Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign, which lasted until July 4, 1863, ended with the city’s surrender. The fall of Vicksburg split the Confederacy in two.

Despite Union success in the summer of 1863, discontent over the war ran throughout the North. This was particularly true in the wake of the Enrollment Act—the first effort at a draft among the northern populace during the Civil War. The working class citizens of New York felt especially angered as wealthy New Yorkers paid $300 for substitutes, sparing themselves from the hardships of war. “A rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight,” became a popular refrain. The Emancipation Proclamation convinced many immigrants in northern cities that freed people would soon take their jobs. This frustration culminated in the New York City Draft Riots in July 1863. Over the span of four days, the white populace killed some 120 citizens including the lynching of at least eleven black New Yorkers. Property damage was in the millions, including the complete destruction of more than fifty properties—most notably that of the Colored Orphan Asylum. In an ultimate irony, the largest civil disturbance to date in the United States (aside from the war itself) was only stopped by the deployment of Union soldiers, some of whom came directly from Gettysburg.

Elsewhere, the North produced widespread displays of unity. Sanitary fairs originated in the old northwest and raised millions of dollars for Union soldiers. Indeed, many women rose to take pivotal leadership roles in the sanitary fairs—a clear contribution to the northern war effort. The fairs also encouraged national unity within the North—something that
became more important as the war entered its second half and casualties continued to mount. The northern homefront was complicated: overt displays of loyalty contrasted with violent dissent.

A similar situation played out in the Confederacy. The Confederate Congress passed its first conscription act in the spring of 1862, a full year before their northern counterparts. Military service was required from all able-bodied males between 18 and 35 (eventually extended to 45.) Notable exemptions likewise existed in the Confederacy, especially for those who owned twenty or more slaves. Discontent on the present state of affairs in the Confederacy reached a boiling point in 1863. Through the spring of 1863 consistent food shortages led to “bread riots” in several Confederate cities, most notably Richmond, Virginia and the Georgia cities of Augusta, Macon, and Columbus. Confederate women led these mobs to protest food shortages and rampant inflation within the Confederate South. Exerting their own political control, women dramatically impacted the war through their violent actions in these cases, as well as constant petitions to Governors for aid and the release of husbands from military service. One of these women wrote a letter to North Carolina Governor, Zebulon Vance, saying “Especially for the sake of suffering women and children, do try and stop this cruel war.” Confederates waged a multi-front struggle against Union incursion and internal dissent.

For some women, the best way to support their cause was spying on the enemy. When the war broke out, Rose O’Neal Greenhow was living in Washington D.C., where she traveled in high social circles, gathering information for her Confederate contact. Suspecting Greenhow of espionage, Allan Pinkerton placed her under surveillance, instigated a raid on her house to gather evidence, and then placed her under house arrest, after which she was incarcerated in Old Capitol prison. Upon her release, she was sent, under guard, to Baltimore, Maryland. From there Greenhow went to Europe to attempt to bring support to the Confederacy. Failing in her efforts, Greenhow decided to return to America, boarding the blockade runner Condor, which ran aground near Wilmington, North Carolina. Subsequently, she drowned after her lifeboat capsized in a storm. Greenhow gave her life for the Confederate cause, while Elizabeth “Crazy Bet” Van Lew sacrificed her social standing for the Union. Van Lew was from a very prominent Richmond, Virginia family and spied on the Confederacy, leading to her being “held in contempt & scorn by the narrow minded men and women of my city for my loyalty.” Indeed, when General Ulysses Grant took control of Richmond, he placed a special guard on Van Lew. In addition to her espionage activities, Van Lew also acted as a nurse to Union prisoners in Libby Prison. For pro-Confederate Southern women, there were more opportunities to show their scorn for the enemy. Some women in New Orleans took these
demonstrations to the level of dumping their chamber pots onto the heads of unsuspecting Federal soldiers who stood underneath their balconies, leading to Benjamin Butler’s infamous General Order Number 28, which arrested all rebellious women as prostitutes.

Amidst these social upheavals, more elaborate military operations predicated on the strategy of hard war defined the war in 1864. The new tactics of hard war evolved slowly, as restraint towards southern civilians and property ultimately gave way to a concerted effort to demoralize southern civilians and destroy the southern economy. Grant’s successes at Vicksburg and Chattanooga, Tennessee (November 1863) and Meade’s cautious pursuit of Lee after Gettysburg prompted Lincoln to promote Grant to general-in-chief of the Union Army in early 1864. This change in command resulted in some of the bloodiest battles of the Eastern Theater. Grant’s Overland Campaign, including the Battle of the Wilderness, the Battle of Cold Harbor, and the siege of Petersburg, demonstrated Grant’s willingness to tirelessly attack the ever-dwindling Army of Northern Virginia. By June 1864, Grant’s army surrounded the Confederate city of Petersburg, Virginia, and slowly began siege operations to cut off Confederate forces and supplies from the capital of Richmond. Meanwhile out west, Union armies under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman implemented hard war strategies and slowly made their way through central Tennessee and north Georgia capturing the vital rail hub of Atlanta in September 1864.

Action in both theaters during 1864 caused even more casualties and furthered the devastation of disease. Disease haunted both armies, and accounted for over half of all Civil War casualties. Sometimes as many as half of the men in a company could be sick. The overwhelming majority of Civil War soldiers came from rural areas, where less exposure to diseases, meant soldiers lacked immunities. Vaccines for diseases such as smallpox were largely unavailable to those outside of cities or towns. Despite the common nineteenth-century tendency to see city-men as weak or soft, soldiers from urban environments tended to succumb to fewer diseases than their rural counterparts. Tuberculosis, measles, rheumatism, typhoid, malaria, and smallpox spread almost unchecked among the armies.

Civil War medicine focused almost exclusively on curing the patient rather than preventing disease.
Many soldiers attempted to cure themselves by concocting elixirs and medicines themselves. These ineffective “home-remedies” were often made from various plants the men found in woods or fields. There was no understanding of germ theory so many soldiers did things that we would consider unsanitary today. They ate food that was improperly cooked and handled, and practiced what we would consider poor personal hygiene. They did not take appropriate steps to ensure that the water they drank was free from bacteria. Diarrhea and dysentery were common. These diseases were especially dangerous, as Civil War soldiers did not understand the value of replacing fluids as they were lost. As such, men affected by these conditions would weaken, and become unable to fight or march, and as they became dehydrated their immune system became less effective, inviting other infections to attack the body. Through trial and error soldiers began to protect themselves from some of the more preventable sources of infection. Around 1862 both armies began to dig latrines rather than rely upon the local waterways. Burying human and animal waste also cut down on exposure to diseases considerably.

Medical surgery was limited and brutal. If a soldier was wounded in the torso, throat, or head there was little surgeons could do. Invasive procedures to repair damaged organs or stem blood loss invariably resulted in death. Luckily for soldiers, only approximately one-in-six combat wounds were to one of those parts. The remaining were to limbs, which was treatable by amputation. Soldiers had the highest chance of survival if the limb was removed within 48 hours of injury. A skilled surgeon could amputate a limb around three to five minutes from start to finish. While the lack of germ theory again caused several unsafe practices, such as using the same tools on multiple patients, wiping hands on filthy gowns, or placing hands in communal buckets of water, there is evidence that amputation offered the best chance of survival.

It is a common misconception that amputation was accompanied without anesthesia and against a patient’s wishes. Since the 1830s Americans understood the benefits of Nitrous Oxide and Ether on easing pain. Chloroform and opium were also used to either render patients unconscious or to dull pain during the procedure. Also, surgeons would not amputate without the patient’s consent.

In the Union army alone, 2.8 million ounces of opium and over 5.2 million opium pills were administered. In 1862 William Alexander Hammon was appointed Surgeon General for the US. He
sought to regulate dosages and manage supplies of available medicines, both to prevent overdosing and to ensure that an ample supply remained for the next engagement. However, his guidelines tended to apply only to the regular federal army. The majority of Union soldiers were in volunteer units and organized at the state level. Their surgeons often ignored posted limits on medicines, or worse experimented with their own concoctions made from local flora.

In the North, the conditions in hospitals were somewhat superior. This was partly due to the organizational skills of women like Dorothea Dix, who was the Union’s Superintendent for Army Nurses. Additionally, many women were members of the United States Sanitary Commission and helped to staff and supply hospitals in the North, helping to prevent supply shortages more often than in southern hospitals.

Women took on key roles within hospitals both North and South. The publisher’s notice for *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army* states, “In the opinion of many, it is the privilege of woman to minister to the sick and soothe the sorrowing – and in the present crisis of our country’s history, to aid our brothers to the extent of her capacity.” Mary Chesnut wrote, “Every woman in the house is ready to rush into the Florence Nightingale business.” However, she indicated that after she visited the hospital “I can never again shut out of view the sights that I saw there of human misery. I sit thinking, shut my eyes, and see it all.”

Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. Kate Cumming volunteered as a nurse shortly after the war began. She, and other volunteers, traveled with the Army of Tennessee. However, all but one of the women who volunteered with Cumming quit within a week.

Death came in many forms—disease, prisons, bullets, even lightning and bee stings, took men slowly or suddenly. Their deaths, however, affected more than their regiments. Before the war, a wife expected to sit at her husband’s bed, holding his hand, and ministering to him after a long, fulfilling life. This type of death, the Good Death, changed during the Civil War as men died often far from home among strangers. Casualty reporting was inconsistent, so
women were often at the mercy of the men who fought alongside her husband to learn not only the details of his death, but even that the death had occurred.

“Now I’m a widow. Ah! That mournful word. Little the world think of the agony it contains!” wrote Sally Randle Perry in her diary. After her husband’s death at Sharpsburg, Sally received the label of she would share with more than 200,000 other white women. The death of a husband and loss of financial, physical, and emotional support could shatter lives. It also had the perverse power to free women from bad marriages and open doors to financial and psychological independence.

Widows had an important role to play in the conflict. The ideal widow wore black, mourned for a minimum of two and a half years, resigned herself to God’s will, focused on her children, devoted herself to her husband’s memory, and brought his body home for burial. Many tried, but not all widows were able to live up to the ideal. Many were unable to purchase proper mourning garb. Silk black dresses, heavy veils, and other features of antebellum mourning were expensive and in short supply. Because most of these women were in their childbearing years, the war created an unprecedented number of widows who were pregnant or still nursing infants. In a time when the average woman gave birth to eight to ten children in her lifetime, it is perhaps not surprising that the Civil War created so many widows who were also young mothers with little free time for formal mourning. Widowhood permeated American society. But in the end, it was up to each widow to navigate her own mourning. She joined the ranks of sisters, mothers, cousins, girlfriends, and communities in mourning men.

By the fall of 1864, military and social events played against the backdrop of the presidential election of 1864. While the war raged on, the presidential contest featured a transformed electorate. Three new states (West Virginia, Nevada, and Kansas) had been added since 1860 while the eleven states of the Confederacy did not participate. Lincoln and his Vice Presidential nominee, Andrew Johnson (Tennessee), ran on the National Union Party ticket. The main competition came from his former commander, General George B. McClellan. Though McClellan himself was a “War
Democrat,” the official platform of the Democratic Party in 1864 revolved around negotiating an immediate end to the Civil War. McClellan’s Vice Presidential nominee was George H. Pendleton of Ohio—a well-known “Peace Democrat.”

On Election Day—November 8, 1864—Lincoln and McClellan each needed 117 electoral votes (out of a possible 233) to win the presidency. For much of the ’64 campaign season, Lincoln downplayed his chances of reelection and McClellan assumed that large numbers of Union soldiers would grant him support. However, thanks in great part to William T. Sherman’s capture of Atlanta on September 2, 1864, and overwhelming support from Union troops, Lincoln won the election easily. Additionally, Lincoln received support from more radical Republican factions (such as John C. Fremont) and members of the Radical Democracy Party that demanded the end of slavery.

In the popular vote, Lincoln crushed McClellan by a margin of 55.1% to 44.9%. In the Electoral College, Lincoln’s victory was even more pronounced at a margin of 212 to 21. Lincoln won twenty-two states, and McClellan only managed to carry three: New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.

In the wake of reelection, Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on March 5, 1865, in which he concluded:

\[ \text{With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.} \]

1864 and 1865 was the very definition of hard war. Incredibly deadly for both sides, these Union campaigns in both the West and the East destroyed Confederate infrastructure and demonstrated the efficacy of the Union’s strategy. Following up on the successful capture of Atlanta, William Sherman conducted his infamous March to the Sea in the fall of 1864 arriving in Savannah with time to capture it and deliver it as a Christmas present for Abraham Lincoln. Sherman’s path of destruction took on an
even more destructive tone as he moved into the heart of the Confederacy in South Carolina in early 1865. The burning of Columbia, South Carolina, and subsequent capture of Charleston brought the hard hand of war to the Magnolia state. In addition, with Grant’s dogged pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, effectively ending major Confederate military operations.

To ensure the permanent legal end of slavery, Republicans drafted the Thirteenth Amendment during the war. Yet the end of legal slavery did not mean the end of racial injustice. During the war, ex-slaves were often segregated into disease-ridden contraband camps. After the war, the Republican Reconstruction program of guaranteeing black rights succumbed to persistent racism and southern white violence. Long after 1865, most black southerners continued to labor on plantations, albeit as nominally free tenants or sharecroppers, while facing public segregation and voting discrimination. The effects of slavery endured long after emancipation.

V. Conclusion

As battlefields fell silent in 1865, the question of secession had been answered, slavery had been eradicated, and America was once again territorially united. But, in many ways, the conclusion of the Civil War created more questions than answers. How would the nation become one again? Who was responsible for rebuilding the South? What role would African Americans occupy in this society? Northern and southern soldiers returned home with broken bodies, broken spirits, and broken minds. Plantation owners had land but not labor. Recently freed African Americans had their labor but no land. Former slaves faced a world of possibilities—legal marriage, reunited family members, employment, and fresh starts—but also a racist world of bitterness, violence, and limited opportunity. The war may have been over, but the battles for the peace were just beginning.

Content provided by The American Yawp
## UNIT 11

### TIMELINE

**Civil War Timeline: 1861 - 1865**

**Militarily: Union and Confederate forces organized.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>April: Attack on Fort Sumter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>April-May: Upper South joined the Confederacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>July: First Battle of Bull Run.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Politically: A surge of political unity arose after Fort Sumter.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>March: Congress passed the Morrill Tariff Act.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>May: Call for a “Union Party” during wartime, uniting Northern War Democrats and Republicans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>June: United States Sanitary Commission established.</td>
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</table>

**Diplomatically: Union concerned with stopping British recognition of the South and involvement in the War. Confederacy interested in obtaining it.**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>May: Queen’s Proclamation of Neutrality issued by Parliament in Great Britain. Prime Minister Lord Palmerston favored the South, but Foreign Minister Lord John Russell did not. Charles Francis Adams arrived in London as new United States Minister to the Court of Saint James’s outraged at the news of co-belligerency essentially being recognized by the British and started negotiations with Lord Russell immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>November: <em>USS San Jacinto</em> under Captain Charles Wilkes’ command captured the <em>HMS Trent</em>, taking representatives of the Confederacy, James Mason and John Slidell, off the vessel as contraband of war and igniting the <em>Trent Affair</em> with Great Britain, which lasted until January 1, 1862. The Confederate commissioners eventually were released to the British with an explanation of Wilkes’ actions, but due to strong relations between Adams and Lord John Russell, the men were not received by the British government; thus, ending any serious hope of the South of using King Cotton Diplomacy to gain formal British recognition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Militarily: More decisive military results with the South winning key battles.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>February: Battles of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>March-August: George McClellan’s peninsular campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>April: Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee. Confederacy instituted the draft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### UNIT 11

#### TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1862 | • September: Battle of Antietam (Union win)  
      | • Battle of Fredericksburg (Confederate win) |

**Politically:** Political dissention of the Peace Democrats surges toward year’s end.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1862 | • February: Legal Tender Act passed.  
      | • May: Congress passed the Homestead Act. Per General Burnside’s orders, Clement Vallandigham of Ohio was arrested, tried by court-martial, and convicted of inciting resistance to the government and war effort.  
      | • July: Pacific Railway Act and Morrill Land Grant Act passed.  
      | • September: Radical Republicans pressured Lincoln to announce the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.  
      | • Fall: News of the impending Emancipation Proclamation turned conservative Northerners against the war effort, leading to a rise in membership in organizations such as the Knights of the Golden Circle. |

**Diplomatcally:** US diplomatic agenda remained the same.

<table>
<thead>
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</table>
| 1862 | • Charles Francis Adams pushed in his negotiations with the British government for it to crack down on British companies selling and outfitting commerce raiders for the Confederacy, such as the CSS *Alabama* had been (built 1862 by John Laird & Sons Company near Liverpool, England).  
      | • Fall: The British reacted with fear to the news of the impending Emancipation Proclamation, despite history of vocal abolitionism. Some in the British upper classes feared a race war and disruption in cotton exports. Some in Parliament questioned the need for intervention in the war on “humanitarian grounds.” |

**Militarily:** Turning point of the war.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
| 1863 | • May: Battle of Chancellorsville.  
      | • July: Battle of Vicksburg (Union win). Battle of Gettysburg (Union win).  
      | • November: Battle of Chattanooga. Union troops capture parts of Texas. |

**Politically:** eight of Peace Democratic opposition to the war. Military and government officials seek to suppress Copperhead activity in the North.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</table>
| 1863 | • January: Emancipation Proclamation became law.  
      | • February: National Bank Act. |
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**TIMELINE**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• March: Congress issued the draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• April: Richmond, Virginia bread riot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• July: New York City draft riots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• November: Copperhead, Clement Vallandigham, lost gubernatorial election in Ohio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• 1863-1865: Great Britain used in political rhetoric throughout the North by Peace Democrat and Republican newspaper editors and politicians as an external threat to the Union which would lead to the Union’s destruction if the other party’s agendas prevailed politically in the North.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diplomatically:**

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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• June: French occupy Mexico City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>• Adams continued his diplomatic work in Great Britain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Militarily: Period of Northern victory and Southern defeat.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• May-June 1864: Battle of the Wilderness and Battle of Spotsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• June 1864: Battle of Cold Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• September-December 1864: Sherman’s March to the Sea and conquering of Atlanta, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• April 1865: Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia, captured by the Union. General Robert E. Lee of the Confederacy surrendered to General Ulysses Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Politically:**

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<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• November 1864: Republican, Abraham Lincoln, reelected over Democratic candidate George McClellan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• October 1864: Lambdin P. Milligan of Illinois, along with others, was arrested by the military for: conspiring to create a Northwest Confederacy, undermining the war effort, and aiding the Confederacy. The men were convicted and sentenced to death, but later Andrew Johnson commuted the sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• April 1865: Lincoln assassinated, and Andrew Johnson became president.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diplomatically:**

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<tr>
<td>1864 - 1865</td>
<td>• June: French backed, Maximilian Ferdinand became Emperor of Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>October: St. Albans, Vermont raid by Confederates from Canada; the British later apologized for the incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Post-War: The US started negotiations with Great Britain for reparations for damages done by British-build vessels like the CSS Alabama. The US and Britain settled this dispute in the 1872 Treaty of Washington and the US was awarded 15.5 million dollars and a British apology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The Unit Notes for this course found in the OER are based on class notes taken during the years in which the instructor was a student in undergraduate and graduate lecture courses or seminars at East Stroudsburg University and Kent State University (circa 1987-1999). When information beyond those notes is referenced in the Unit Notes, the source on which it is based is mentioned.